

"PLIGHT"

OVER BLACK we hear the constant sound of shooting water and howling wind.

MAURICE (V.O.)
(spoken slowly, somberly)
O, I'm really sorry man. I'm sorry
I was blind before, but I see now
and I know what I gotta do.

A female voice begins humming angelically, wafting us to:

FADE IN:

INT. SHOWER - NIGHT

JOYCE BATES, a white woman, early forties, whirls her head about, as warm, steamy water showers her trim body.

EXT. PARKED SEDAN - CURBSIDE - SAME

Outside hail falls from the sky, SMACKING against the roof of a black BMW like marbles hitting tile. Whoever decided to drive this fine German sedan during a hail storm is not in their right mind.

INT. WALL - LIVING ROOM - SAME

Below a cursive stencil that reads: *The Best of Times*, are dozens of family photos. Further along the wall, a sofa rests before a large window. The curtains are drawn back, allowing us to see the DARK NEBULOUS FIGURE moving toward the house.

VANITY - BATHROOM

Joyce whisks a blow-dryer through her silky, brunette hair at the same time a faint bell echoes throughout the house. Joyce switches off the blow dryer, pauses, listens past water slowly draining down clogged pipes. After a short breath --
DING DONG.

JOYCE
(calls out)
Is someone getting the door?

STAIRCASE

ALLEN BATES(24), a despondent looking Caucasian male, descends down a carpeted staircase to the --

FRONT DOOR

-- where he peers in through the --

PEEP HOLE (POV)

-- at MAURICE BARKELY(17), a black man, masked in a dark poncho, holding a brown paper bag, looking none too happy.

ALLEN
 (calls out)
 Ey Dad, food's here!
 (spoken under breath)
 ...only took a week.

Allen opens the door, a flurry of cold, wet air whirls in.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
 Hey...

Maurice doesn't respond, instead sharpens his glare at Allen.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
 ... Yeah, uh... my dad will be down
 in just a moment. He has the money.

Maurice nods his head, like a determined soldier. AARON BATES, a tall, 42 year old man, emerges from the back. Allen shrivels up. Maurice's glare suddenly turns razor sharp.

AARON
 Did you pay?

ALLEN
 Huh?... Oh, no I thought...

Aaron looks down at Allen.

AARON
 Thought what?

ALLEN
 ...My wallet, I lost it, remember?
 Figured you or mom would pay...

Aaron eyes Allen the way only a shamed father would, pulls out his wallet.

AARON
 Make sure they got everything
 right, will ya.

Maurice gives Allen the bag, he feels for him.

AARON (CONT'D)
 (spoken to Maurice)
 Every time we order from you guys,
 something's missing.

ALLEN
Everything looks right.

AARON
Did they put packets of soy sauce
in there?

ALLEN
Yeah, they're in there.

AARON
How many?

ALLEN
I don't know... enough.
(eyeing Allen, spoken to
Maurice)
How much I owe you?

MAURICE
With delivery, eighteen fifty, sir.

AARON
Eighteen fifty? -- You're gonna
stand there and charge me eighteen
fifty for a few cartons of rice?

MAURICE
I don't make the prices, sir.

Aaron hands over a TWENTY, sizes up Maurice.

AARON
Sure you don't. You just make
trouble, huh?

A moment passes as Maurice lowers his eyes, readies himself.

MAURICE
I'm assuming you want change back?

AARON
(grinning)
You're smarter than you look.

Allen sighs shamefully, mouths the words '*I'm sorry*' to Maurice. Maurice eyes Allen pensively, suddenly at odds with what he has come to do, but it's too late. Maurice puts his hands under his poncho, without warning - **POP-POP-POP-POP** - rapid gun fire EXPLODES out into the bodies of both men.

INT. MOVING POLICE SEDAN - STREETS - SAME

Windshield wipers battle against icy pellets raining down. Scattered happenings from a hectic world filter in choppy through a dispatch radio. LOUIS(28), a black male officer sitting in the passengers seat, cell phone in hand, glances to his left at ROB SIMS(38), a burnt out white officer with light bruising on his face.

LOUIS
Hey you believe in miracles?

ROB SIMS
...Do I believe in Miracles?

LOUIS
Yeah.

Rob scoffs.

ROB SIMS
No. I do not believe in Miracles. I believe in luck.

Louis shows Rob a message on his cell phone.

LOUIS
Read that, then tell me you don't believe in miracles.

Rob reads the message, plays down his surprise.

Louis puts his hand over his heart.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
(sarcastic)
Even though you're not showing it, I know you're convinced inside.

Rob shakes his head.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
Think about it, when was the last time SGT sent out a message like that?

ROB SIMS
It's called getting lucky. Luck smiled on us tonight, that's it. If you wanna talk about miracles, explain how someone with a face like yours landed a prize like Cynthia?

Louis laughs, looks at Rob.

LOUIS

Good one, that was your best one yet. But let me explain something to you *patna*, us brothas are born with something real special. Something no other race of person is born with. You know what it is?

ROB SIMS

What drama?

LOUIS

No, charm. In fact, it's a miracle in your favor that society writes us off.

ROB SIMS

Why's that?

LOUIS

Because if the playing field were equal, there wouldn't be any women left for pasty folk like yourself.

Both Rob and Louis laugh.

LOUIS (CONT'D)

Speaking of which, I gotta ask, when are you gonna come over and try some of Cynthia's cooking? She keeps hounding me, saying how much she wants to meet the guy I sneak off with at all crazy hours of the night. As your partner, I feel a little insulted that you still haven't seen my prized wife other than in photos.

(eyeing Rob)

What do you say? I'll call her now, let her know we're on our way?

Rob mulls over the idea. Louis waits for an answer, but is interrupted by a high-pitched hot tone flooding in hard - **BEEP BEEP BEEP.**

POLICE DISPATCH

(female voice)

All units, all units 10-12 to emergency channel.

Louis switches the channel.

POLICE DISPATCH (CONT'D)

There's been a reported shooting at 4531 East Oak Lane. RP is a spouse, suspect said to have fled the scene in a black BMW. License plate unknown. Victim is a --

EXT. BMW SEDAN - HUDSON RIVER PARK - NIGHT

The BMW brakes alongside a guardrail. Down below, chunks of ice float around on the surface of a half frozen river.

INT. SEDAN

Maurice wipes the gun clean of fingerprints, empties the clip. The sun visors down. Maurice looks up, checks his face in the mirror and finds specks of blood under his right eye - *a sign of a good kill*. Maurice pauses, considers his actions, then steps out onto the --

WOODEN DOCK

Hail continues to shower down as Maurice moves toward the --

GUARDRAIL

Maurice leans over, looks both ways, then casually tosses the gun into the dark abyss never to be seen again.

DISSOLVE TO:

OVER BLACK: EARLIER

INT. 1981 OLDSMOBILE CUTLASS - BANK - DAY

Maurice holds a cell phone to his ear, scratches in between an ANKLE MONITOR.

MAURICE

(spoken into phone)

Na, shit's still on. Fuckin' ankle's raw man.

(listening)

The bank.

(listening)

Ha-ha, ain't even gonna lie my nigga, it crossed my mind a few times.

Maurice looks up through a cracked windshield.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

But yo, he's coming out, I'll holla at you later.

OREN SMART(25), a stout, austere black male with a beard the Robertson family would be proud of, emerges from a --

BANK

-- carrying a small duffel bag. Oren enters the --

SEDAN

-- plops down in the drivers seat.

MAURICE

They just let you walk out with that, no questions asked?

OREN

It's my money.

Oren chucks the bag at Maurice, who catches it, balances it in his hand.

MAURICE

Damn! Shits got some weight to it. How much is in here O?

OREN

What did I tell you about talking like that?

MAURICE

Man you always saying some shit.

Maurice opens the bag, his eyes light up in astonishment at the mounds of cash inside. He's never seen money like this.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

ARE YOU FU --
(off Maurice's sharp glare)
... Real?

Oren glances down at the bracelet on Maurice's ankle, inserts the key into the ignition.

OREN

So what did you do to earn that?

The engine cranks, struggles to turn over. Oren keeps at it.

MAURICE

Earn what?

OREN

That fine piece of jewelry on your ankle.

MAURICE

Oh that... It was a gift.

OREN

...A gift, huh? Did any of those bums you roll with receive one of those gifts, too or were you the only lucky one?

Maurice ignores Oren, removes the cash, plays with it like a fresh deck of cards.

MAURICE

Daayumn! How much money's in here?

OREN

Hey man, don't wrinkle it.

Maurice pauses, looks at Oren.

MAURICE

You ain't serious, are you?
 (off Oren's firm visage)
 Shit you are serious. Damn O, 9 to 5 niggas can only dream about making this kind of cash and all you're worried about is fuckin wrinkles?

Maurice scoffs.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

They sure don't make em like you anymore.

OREN

It's about presentation.

MAURICE

...Presentation??

OREN

Yeah, presentation. How you present yourself determines the way you are perceived, Maurice. And you aren't doing such a good job at changing the way people see you.

Maurice laughs.

MAURICE

A good job?... Look at us Oren.
We're parked outside a bank with a
shit ton of money in a fucking BAG.
Not to mention we're black. What
do you think po-po would do if they
rolled up on us right now, huh?
They wouldn't say looky here
nigger's, ya'll ain't doing a good
job presenting yourselves.

Maurice laughs. Oren continues to crank the engine.

MAURICE (CONT'D)

Shit... First they'd take all your
money, then they'd arrest us both
on some bullshit charge. You know
why? Because they're perception of
us, Oren. That's why. What we do
don't matter. We we're black then,
shit we even blacker now. You of
all people should know that.

The engine finally fires up. Oren pauses, lowers his eyes,
then puts the car in reverse.

BAILIFF (V.O.)

All rise.

INT. DEFENSE TABLE - COURTROOM - DAY

JON JOHNSON(36), a handsome, white lawyer, dressed in an
Italian suit stands to his feet. Standing beside Jon is his
foolhardy, tatted white client, TY SUMAT(31).

JUDGE

Has the jury reached a verdict?

Ty appears nervous. Jon seems annoyed.

FEMALE JURY FOREMAN

We have, your honor.

JUDGE

What say you?

FEMALE JURY FOREMAN

We the jury, find the defendant Ty
Sumat, not guilty.

The courtroom erupts like a volcano! Cheers and boos, mixed
feelings of disappointment and elation ooze out. The JUDGE
bangs his gavel, yells ORDER!

Ty breathes a deep sigh of relief, turns and embraces his teary eyed mother, receives a frigid head nod from his hardened father. Ty then faces Jon, who is vigorously gathering his things.

TY

Look, I just want to say --

Jon turns, stops Ty, moves in tight. We get the feeling that these two aren't close.

JON JOHNSON

(spoken firmly)

Nothing needs to be said. I did a family favor, that's it. Got it?

TY

(beat)

Got it.

JON JOHNSON

Good.

Jon closes his briefcase, puts on a phony face for his clients thankful parents. He then walks toward the courtroom doors, beholds a MOTHER crying tears of injustice.

INT. BEDROOM - ALLEN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Two people have sex beneath silky white sheets.

JENNIFER O.S.

Oh God, Allen don't stop, don't stop!

ALLEN O.S.

I can't hold it anymore. I gotta go.

JENNIFER O.S.

Wait, not yet, I'm almost there...

Allen's body tenses as if he is having a seizure. He moans, grunts. He finishes in thunderous fashion, and then silence.

JENNIFER

You came?

(short beat)

You fucking came. You are so Goddamn selfish. Get off me.

Disappointed, JENNIFER(23) pushes Allen off, removes the sheets.

ALLEN

I'm sorry...

JENNIFER

No denying that.

ALLEN

You have no idea how hard it is for
guys to control that.

Jennifer ignores Allen, gets dressed.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Where you going?

JENNIFER

To find someone who can finish what
you couldn't!

Jennifer grabs her things, storms out of the room.

INT. BATHROOM - APARTMENT - DAY

Standing uncomfortably before a medicine cabinet mirror is ALEXUS BERRYLANE. For a teenage girl her skin is remarkably smooth, her breasts deliciously supple. Today is Alexis's first day as a barista and her physically mature body is having a hard time squeezing into the uniform.

MARIA (O.S.)

(yelled from other room)

C'mon Alexis! Don't forget you
gotta take me to work.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

Vehicles speed by, impatiently honking their horns as a --

SLOW MOVING SEDAN

-- driven by Alexis, a nervous wreck, all ten of her fingers firmly gripping the steering wheel, crawls down the highway.

MARIA

You alright?

(off Alexis's head nod)

Don't let it bother you.

Alexis looks over at her mother, MARIA BERRYLANE(32).

ALEXUS

Don't let what bother me?

MARIA

Don't look at me. Keep your eyes on
the road!

Alexus quickly turns her attention back to the road.

ALEXUS

I looked at you because you asked
me a question!

MARIA

Learn to multi-task.

Alexus surrenders with a salty expression. After a prolonged
beat of silent driving Maria speaks.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I act like nothing's
going on when so much is happening.
I'm proud of you Alexis, really.
The way you're handling everything.
I can't imagine how hard it must be
having to watch your parents go
through this. You're showing a lot
of maturity that's for sure. Thank
you.

Maria's eyes probe Alexis's body, her chest in particular.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

ALEXUS

No. I need to focus on the road,
remember?

MARIA

Oh, c'mon...

ALEXUS

(sighs)
What?

Maria reaches over with her arm --

MARIA

Where did you get these?

The car swerves.

ALEXUS

Moom! Stop! What are you doing?
You want to get us both killed?

MARIA
 (smiling)
 Don't be so dramatic.

ALEXUS
 Don't be so perverted!

A silent beat passes. Alexis sneaks a peek at her mother now fondling her own breasts.

ALEXUS (CONT'D)
 God, you're weird.

MARIA
 It's not fair, though.

INT. VACANT UNIT - INCOME RESTRICTED RENTAL PROPERTY - DAY

SHEILA SIMS(35), the roots of her black ethnicity camouflaged by fair skin, follows a FEMALE STAFF WORKER(37) down a narrow staircase, that sounds like it's still settling.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
 Tenants are only responsible for rent and water. Like we spoke about over the phone, a five hundred dollar deposit is due upon signing of the lease. But depending on your credit check it's possible for that fee to be waived.

Both women stop at the base of the staircase. Sheila glides her hand along a smooth wooden hand rail. The staff worker rubs her chin, shuffles through her memory bank.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)
 There was something else... What was it?

SHEILA
 Take my advice, write everything down. You should see all the notes I have scattered around the house. Without em, I'd forget to breathe.

The female staff worker smiles, sets her hand on top of Sheila's, hinting toward something.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
 Sounds like we both need a getaway.

For a brief moment, Sheila and the staff worker share a connection that goes beyond mere service. Sheila then kindly moves her hand away, strolls into the living room.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)

(short beat)

So what do you think?

SHEILA

I'm thinking it's great. I love it.
It's nice and bright that's for
sure.

The staff worker follows Sheila into the living room.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

Good. That's what I like to hear.

(suddenly remembers)

Aha -- now I remember, I wanted to
show you the back patio, it's one
of the best features of this
property. Let's have a look, shall
we.

EXT. CAR DEALERSHIP - DAY

The Cutlass slithers into a lot fenced in by barbed wire.

CUTLASS SEDAN

Oren navigates. Maurice looks out the window like a kid at a
candy store, admiring an array of shiny vehicles.

MAURICE

(pointing at a vehicle)

Yooo, you see that Range?!

(turns to Oren)

You see it?

OREN

Yeah, I see it.

Maurice eyes Oren wondering what cloth he's been cut from.

MAURICE

I don't think you do. O, those rims
are Modular Society Slate's, man.
One set will put you back like five
G's. Shits clean... That's
definitely me right there.

OREN

You should get one.

Maurice rolls his eyes, scoffs at Oren.

MAURICE

Yeah okay. How do you suppose I do that? My pockets ain't fat like yours.

OREN

After graduation you could come up to Alaska with me for the summer. Try your hand at fishing.

Maurice explodes into laughter. Oren looks over confused.

OREN (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

MAURICE

You! Who you foolin' O? It's me man. I know what stock you come from. Ain't no way in hell you made all that money catching fish overseas.

Oren squeezes the Cutlass in between two other cars, kills the engine... turns to Maurice.

OREN

Ey, look at me.

Maurice ignores Oren, instead pays his attention to the shiny vehicles, a move which earns him a slap to the back of the head.

MAURICE

FUCK man! What the hell you do that for?!

OREN

When I TELL you to look at me, LOOK AT ME! And what's the deal with your mouth?

Maurice curls his lips, sizes Oren up. Oren shakes his head.

OREN (CONT'D)

No, that's a bad idea Maurice. Trust me.

Maurice looks away, rubs the back of his head.

OREN (CONT'D)

First of all, Alaska is part of America stupid. And second, I'm not like my old man.

(MORE)

OREN (CONT'D)

You may not say it, but I know that's what you're getting at. And quite frankly, I'm tired of you holding that over me. Every dime I made is honest, understand?

(waiting)

UNDERSTAND?!

Maurice turns to Oren, yells.

MAURICE

Yes, GOD DAMN! Can't even joke around with you.

Oren scoffs.

OREN

That sums it up, that's all life is to you, some colossal joke, huh?

MAURICE

Here we go, do we really gotta talk about this right now?

(eyes Oren)

I know I got a lot to learn, I realize that. This damn bracelet reminds me everyday. But I thought we came here to get a car, man?

OREN

You're right, we did come here to get a car and we will. I'm just, I'm worried about you... I really am. Your heads messed up. All I hear coming outta your mouth is fog man, nigga this, nigga that. You don't hear white people talking to each other like that, do you?

MAURICE

You can't compare us to white people. They don't live the same life we do.

OREN

Oh, so what, you're some kind of historian on the matter now?

MAURICE

Ain't gotta be a historian Oren. Just gotta open your eyes.

Maurice points his head forward at a white CAR SALESMAN approaching, wearing a nice tie and a smile.

A prolonged beat of silence passes.

OREN

You know something, your head's
harder than steel. Maybe that's a
good thing, I don't know.

(looks at Maurice)

But how can you enjoy being
ignorant, Maurice? That I don't
get.

For a fleeting moment Maurice actually listens to Oren.

OREN (CONT'D)

You keep this up and you're gonna
end up right back where I found you
or worse.

INT. SHODDY SUV - PARKING LOT - LAGUARDIA AIRPORT - DAY

Cell phone pinned to her ear, Sheila circles her SUV around a
parking lot chock full of cars.

SHEILA

(spoken into phone)

Huh?

(listening)

Oh yeah, no, we arrived 5 minutes
ago, but this place is jam-packed.
Is something going on? Cop cars
everywhere.

HAILEY O.S.

Mom look, take that one. Think that
guy's leaving.

Sheila glances to her right at HAILEY(14), her gorgeous
daughter, connected at the hip with her cellphone.

SHEILA

Where?

Hailey points.

HAILEY

Right there. See, he's backing out.

SHEILA

(spoken into the phone)

Nigiel hold on a sec.

Sheila drops the phone between her legs.

RUSH (V.O. PRE-LAP)
 (deep-seated voice)
 Hello?

EXT. CURBSIDE - LAGUARDIA - SAME

Tucked in between two other vehicles is an ORDINARY WHITE IMPALA. Sunken down low in the drivers seat, flip phone at his ear, is a male LOOKOUT, doing just that, looking out.

LOOKOUT
 (spoken into phone)
 We got company, two of em right by the door.

Posted directly outside the entrance to the airport are LOUIS, and ANOTHER OFFICER.

LOOKOUT (CONT'D)
 (listening)
 Oh yeah it's five-o, no doubt. They got that look to em. Should I handle it?

SEAT NEARBY BAGGAGE CLAIM - SAME

On the other end of the phone, sitting on a cushioned bench is RUSH(28) a cunning, low-cut black male.

RUSH
 (spoken into phone)
 Na, I got this. Last time I checked this was still a free country. I'mma walk right out.

A red light flashes above the baggage claim. Rush looks up. PASSENGERS from the previous flight begin to congregate around.

RUSH (CONT'D)
 So be cool, aight. I gotta go. And yo, don't call this number again.

Rush ends the call. A buzzer sounds, the first piece of luggage falls out onto the conveyor belt. Rush covertly removes a small black pouch from his backpack, pockets it. He then silences his phone, password protects it, and makes his way over to the --

BAGGAGE CLAIM

-- where bags of all shapes and sizes begin flopping out onto the conveyor belt. Rush meticulously eyes each bag. Eventually the right candidate plops down onto the belt.

Rush takes it, slips the black pouch and smart phone into the bag then carefully places it back on the belt.

LUGGAGE POV

Onward goes the implicated suitcase, down the long conveyor belt, passing crowds of impatient passengers, until it is wrestled off by JANETTE(64), a short haired, trim, black woman plagued by arthritis.

JANETTE

Jesus, that's heavy. Nigiel, come over here and help me with this bag, would you.

NIGIEL

(spoken into phone)

Hey Sheila, our bags just came out. What side are you gonna be on?

(listening)

Okay, we'll be out in like two minutes. See ya.

NIGIEL, an average height, decent man, helps his mother grab the guilty bag off the conveyor belt.

JANETTE

Was that your sister?

Nigiel sets the bags down on the ground.

NIGIEL

Yeah. They're already here. She said she'll meet us on the north side.

JANETTE

Okay good, your aunt Gwen should be here any minute as well.

(looks around)

Have you seen a bathroom anywhere?

From afar, Rush rolls his suitcase along, glancing back over his shoulder at Nigiel before exiting the airport through --

SLIDING GLASS DOORS

-- where he is immediately swallowed up by law enforcement.

INT. OFFICE - POLICE DEPARTMENT - LATER DAY

Maurice sits down on a chair watching his PAROLE officer unfastens the ankle monitor.

PAROLE OFFICER
Bet it feels nice finally getting
this thing off, huh?

MAURICE
You ever had one of these on your
ankle?

PAROLE OFFICER
(chuckling)
Can't say I have. Can't say I ever
committed a crime, either.

MAURICE
Then you have no idea how it feels.

The parole officer removes the bracelet; written on the
inside of the band is:

PAROLE OFFICER
Every level, new devil?

The officer looks up at Maurice strangely.

MAURICE
Am I free to go now?

FRONT DOORS

Maurice pushes through double doors, passing by two officers
hauling in Rush.

HOLDING ROOM - LATER

Rush sits at a table, handcuffed, comically watching OFFICERS
tear through his belongings.

RUSH
After you two clowns finish wasting
my time, I want all my things put
back just how ya'll found them.

Louis turns the suitcase upside down, shaking out any
overlooked items. Having found none, he turns toward a --

TWO-WAY GLASS WINDOW

-- and shakes his head at the two men watching from the --

OTHER ROOM

Lieutenant STEVE GRUM(41), a clean shaven man, takes a long
sip from his coffee mug, mulling over his options.

DETECTIVE AARON

Let me have a go at him Lieutenant.

Steve then turns toward DETECTIVE AARON GATES(40) a former football quarterback, turned eager cop.

HOLDING ROOM

The door opens. Rush looks up at Detective Aaron, and the manila file in his hand.

RUSH

You must be the lucky fellow who gets to rearrange all this mess back in my bag. Your two stooges here aren't very neat.

Aaron closes the door.

DETECTIVE AARON

No they are not, but you certainly are Mr. Rush. Almost to a fault.

RUSH

What can I say, I'm a product of good upbringing.

Aaron glances at the handcuffs.

AARON

Evidently.

Aaron takes a seat across from Rush, mulls over something.

DETECTIVE AARON

Perhaps you can help me with an embarrassing problem I'm having.

Rush frowns, unsure where Aaron's going with this one.

DETECTIVE AARON (CONT'D)

Do I stink? I mean can you smell me from where you're sitting?

Aaron smells himself, grimaces.

DETECTIVE AARON (CONT'D)

Whoo, God, how does anyone get used to that? -- See Rush I'm beginning to develop this stale odor. My wife can't stand it. She won't share the bed til I wash it off. Sometimes it's so thick that not even a good scrubbing does the trick.

(MORE)

DETECTIVE AARON (CONT'D)
I tried explaining to her that all day everyday, from dawn to dusk when you're surrounded by monkeys, you're bound to start smelling like one.

Louis grits his teeth, disturbed by what he is hearing.

DETECTIVE AARON (CONT'D)
I'll tell you right now, I can't do another night on the couch, it's crippling. So what I need to know from you is, what products you use to get rid of that monkey smell?

Aaron leans in, takes a whiff of Rush's body odor.

DETECTIVE AARON (CONT'D)
See, you don't have that monkey smell. I don't get it, why do you smell so different?

Rush claps his hands.

RUSH
(chuckling)
That's real funny, never heard that one.

DETECTIVE AARON
(smiling)
Yeah?

RUSH
Yeah, and as much as I'd like to help you with your hygiene issues, as you can see my hands are cuffed. But if you take these off I'd be more than happy to pay a visit to your wife and talk some dick, pardon me, SENSE into her.

Aaron smiles wryly at Rush.

DETECTIVE
I bet you would. You monkey's sure love to fuck. No denying that.
(beat looking through file)
So word on the street, you're fluent in Spanish, yeah? Bet that helps with negotiations in Venezuela, huh?
(MORE)

DETECTIVE (CONT'D)

Here in your file it says you managed to graduate from high school.

(sarcastic)

How the fuck did that happen?

Rush laughs.

RUSH

You're funny detective. I like you. And I'm impressed, you did your homework. But you're forgetting one thing detective?

DETECTIVE AARON

Yeah? What's that?

RUSH

I went to a JC. Played a little ball, earned my associates in Criminal Justice. Smuggling is a federal offense, minimum ten years if you ain't black. You know how many white women I'd miss out on being locked away that long?

Rush smiles. Aaron laughs, pulls out several PHOTOS from the file, slides them over.

DETECTIVE AARON

Seems you're not very photogenic Rush.

Rush looks over surveillance images of himself at the airport, shrugs his shoulders.

RUSH

Want me to autograph these for you or something?

DETECTIVE AARON

No thanks. The world doesn't know you yet. But they will. Until then, a confession and the whereabouts of the diamonds will due.

RUSH

You and these diamonds. How can I confess to something I know nothing about?

DETECTIVE AARON

Who's bag was it?

RUSH

Now that all depends on what bag
you're talkin' about?

DETECTIVE AARON

(sarcastic laugh)

What bag I'm talking about...

(grabs photo, points at
bag)

This bag! The bag you smuggled the
diamonds in.

RUSH

A common mistake detective. You
know all those bags at the airport
look alike. Thought I saw my bag,
so I pulled it off the belt,
checked inside and realized I
grabbed the wrong one. Then I set
it back down.

Rush checks the time on a lavish watch wrapped around his
wrist.

DETECTIVE AARON

Got somewhere to be Rush?

RUSH

We all got somewhere to be
detective, but I'm just wondering
what's a *reasonable* amount of time.

DETECTIVE AARON

A reasonable amount of time for
what?

RUSH

This, whatever THIS is...
I'm black so I'm a suspect, I get
that. And if you can legitimately
justify holding me then I'm at your
mercy, but let's be real detective,
you're reaching.

INT. SEDAN - CURBSIDE - LIBRARY - NIGHT

Alexus reaches over the passengers seat, unlocks the door for
her exhausted mother.

INT. SEDAN - MOVING

Maria covers her mouth, yawns heavily.

ALEXUS

Long day?

MARIA

The longest yet...

Maria turns to her left, notices that Alexis is driving faster this time, relaxed with only one hand on the wheel.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Judging by the way you're driving,
I'd say you had a better day than I
did.

Alexis keeps her eyes on the road as the corners of her mouth curve up.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EARLIER DAY

Alexis is behind the counter, holding two plastic cups and a marker.

ALEXUS

Can I get your name sir?

Jon, ever-handsome, casually dressed, stands at the register admiring her figure.

JON JOHNSON

Sure, it's Jon. Spelled just J-O-N,
no H.

ALEXUS

Oh, okay. That's pretty easy.

Alexis writes Jon's name on both cups.

JON JOHNSON

It's more commonly spelled with an
H, guess I'm a fan of things short
and sweet.

Alexis smiles, walks back toward the register, nearly bumps into her nose MANAGER(20's) -- rings up the bill.

ALEXUS

Two Vanilla Lattes, one with an
extra shot of espresso.
(looks up at Jon, smiling)
Will that be all Jon?

JON JOHNSON

I don't know, anything else you
think I need?

Alexus smiles.

ALEXUS
You're funny.

The manager eavesdrops on the exchange between Alexis and Jon. Jon pulls out a stack of cash from his pocket.

ALEXUS (CONT'D)
Okay, your total is going to be ten
nineteen.

Jon flips through egregiously large bills, eventually spots a ten and some singles.

JON JOHNSON
(glances at Alexis's name
tag)
Here you go --

Alexus takes the cash.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Alexus, huh? You spell your name
with a U. I like that, it's
different.

ALEXUS
(blushing)
Thank you.

Alexus's glances down at her name tag, pinned to her protruding breast.

JON JOHNSON
Can I ask you something Alexis?

Alexus places the money in the til, looks up.

ALEXUS
Sure.

JON JOHNSON
Do you have any idea what your name
means?

ALEXUS
It's the female version of Alex,
right?

Jon laughs.

JON JOHNSON

Yeah I guess you can say it is. But it's also Greek. I studied a bit back in college. Alexis means defender of mankind.

ALEXUS

So you're saying I'm some kind of super hero or something?

JON JOHNSON

Maybe. Certainly pretty enough to be.

Alexus's face turns scarlet red. She lowers her eyes, folds her hair back behind her ear then hands Jon his change.

ALEXUS

Here you are. Eighty one cents is your change. I'll have those Lattes right up.

Alexus closes the register. Jon receives his change, eying Alexis seductively.

CLOSING TIME - NIGHT

Alexus plays with a Name Compatibility Application behind the counter while the manager counts the money in the till.

MANAGER

(mockingly)

I studied a little Greek in college. Wonder how you say 'cradle robber' in Greek...

Alexus laughs.

ALEXUS

Do I hear jealously?

MANAGER

Jealously? From me?! C'mon... Dude comes in all the time. Don't think you're the first.

(sarcastically spoken)

Jon without the H probably has some weird fetish for gullible young girls.

ALEXUS

You think I'm gullible?

MANAGER

No, I think dude is a Chester.

ALEXUS

What's a Chester?

The manager removes the cash tray and slams the till.

MANAGER

Forget it, nevermind. Just give that name compatibility crap a rest and hit the floors with the mop for me, would ya.

CLOSE UP of Alexis's phone screen: digital balloons and confetti float up over the word 'congratulations'.

INT. TOILET BATHROOM - ALLEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Allen stands typing on his cell phone with his right hand. His left hand aims a stream of piss into the toilet.

CLOSE UP of Allen's text message conversation:

ALLEN'S MESSAGE

Hey, what are you doing?

A message is being typed... after a short beat it arrives.

JENNIFER'S MESSAGE

About to orgasm. You?

Allen looks at Jennifer's response disgusted, flushes the toilet.

EXT. BEDROOM - JON'S HOME - NIGHT

Remarkably well kept, in silk lingerie, CHRISTINE JOHNSON(39), knocks against the bathroom door. On the other side, water roars from a faucet.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

Honey...? Are you okay in there?

Christine moves her ear toward the door.

BATHROOM

Steam fogs up a large mirror above an elaborate vanity. The roar of water is amplified as are grunts, moans and what appears to be penile slurping. On the toilet seat, head tilted back sits Jon. In his left hand he holds a TEENAGE SMUT MAGAZINE, while his right hand slides up and down on his hardened pecker.

MINUTES LATER

Jon leans over the sink, washes his hands and catches his breath as if he just completed a triathlon. Jon wipes clear a small section on the mirror, once-overs his face, he's floating. Jon exhales a final deep breath, tucks the magazine up under the sink and exits the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM/BEDROOM - CHLOE'S HOME - NIGHT

Oren darts out from the bathroom, stark naked, covering his third leg with both hands, beelining it toward the --

BED

-- where a broad shouldered, stunning Caucasian girl, CHLOE(22) lies under the covers, also naked.

Oren slides under the sheets.

OREN

Jesus, it's freezing!

Chloe turns to her side, Oren presses his muscular body up against her firm backside. Chloe breathes out passionately.

CHLOE

Oh my God...

(chuckles)

Seriously, something's wrong with you Oren. How is it getting hard again?

Eyes closed, Oren grins, kisses every inch of Chloe's silk back.

OREN

Are you complaining?

Oren kisses behind Chloe's ear, Chloe smiles, giggles.

CHLOE

No, I'm just saying, it's not like you. Usually you're one and done.

Oren's left hand fumbles around under the covers, Chloe jerks forward, closes her eyes, moans.

OREN

Does that feel like I'm done?

CHLOE
 (pleasured)
 Uh-uh...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CURBSIDE - APARTMENT - **DAYS LATER**

Maurice looks up, winces against the bright sun as a SHODDY SUV drives by.

OREN O.S.
 Jesus Maurice, this is more than
 just a scratch.

Maurice looks down.

MAURICE
 I know, my bad O...

Oren is on his knees using saliva to buff out a deep scratch on their shiny new pre-owned BMW.

OREN
 That's all you got to say?... My
 bad? What the hell were ya'll doing
 last night?

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - PREVIOUS NIGHT

Maurice casually exits the store, hiding something under his coat. CLOSE UP of a BLACK MAN, not all there, sketching away in the corner.

ANTONIO (O.S.)
 Psst, yo!

Maurice looks around, spots ANTONIO(19), a problematic black male behind the wheel of the BMW sedan.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
 Hurry the fuck up man! C'mon!

Maurice runs to the car, hops in the back seat. A stolen bottle of OLD ENGLISH falls from under his coat, SHATTERS! The Indian SHOP OWNER runs out pissed, as the car speeds away.

BLACK MAN
 (British accent)
 Kids nowadays sure are wasteful.

The shop owner turns, looks at the black man in front of his store.

SHOP OWNER
 (spoken to man sketching)
 You again. How many times do I have
 to tell you, no loitering outside
 my shop!

INT. MOVING SEDAN - LATER NIGHT

Hip-hop music plays loud. A scantily dressed FEMALE kisses on
 an intoxicated Antonio while he drinks and drives.

The sedan swerves.

MAURICE
 Ey man focus on the road... Shit...

Maurice has a euphoric look on his face. The sedan swerves
 again. A DRUNKEN GIRL coughs, lifts up her head from the
 backseat, takes a break from pleasuring Maurice.

DRUNKEN GIRL
 I almost choked.

MAURICE
 Ant, slow the fuck down shit!

Antonio glances in the rearview mirror.

ANTONIO
 Chill out nigga, I got this.

MAURICE
 No, you don't got shit!

The sedan swerves again.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
 Ey watch the cars!

It GRINDS against several cars parked along the curb.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
 Goddamn man! What the fuck! Stop
 the car! Pull over!

The sedan screeches to a halt. HOLD ON serious damage on the
 right side of the sedan. Maurice runs around to the right
 side --

MAURICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Damn!! Shit man, what the fuck!
 Oren's gonna have my ass...

BACK TO:

EXT. CURBSIDE - APARTMENT - PRESENT DAY

Oren stands to his feet.

MAURICE

Honestly we were just chillin' O.

Oren puts his hands on his hips, surrenders a deep breath and looks up across the way at the --

SHODDY SUV NOW PARKED.

Hailey, earbuds dangling from her lobes, exits the front seat and opens the rear door for her TWO ADOLESCENT SIBLINGS.

BACK TO CURBSIDE

For a moment Oren loses himself in reverie watching the family disappear into the unit.

MAURICE

I know I fucked up O --

(off Oren's glare)

-- Messed, I messed up. But it ain't that bad, right? I mean, it's still drivable.

A moment of silence passes. Oren breathes out heavily.

OREN

You know that money I gave you?

MAURICE

Yeah, what about it?

OREN

I need it back.

INT. BANK - DAY

All eyes are on Oren walking into a bank. Oren moves behind a mother and son standing in line.

BANK TELLER (O.S.)

I can help who's next.

The mother and son move to the counter. Oren glances over his shoulder, connects with a GUARD's sinister eyes. Oren nods his head, turns back around, sees a second bank teller waving her hand.

FEMALE BANK TELLER #2

Sir.

(off Oren's look)

I can help you over here.

Oren walks up to the counter.

BANK TELLER #2

Hello, what can I help you with today?

Oren places a stack of cash on the counter.

OREN

I need to open a CD under the name Maurice Barkely.

BANK TELLER #2

Sure. I can help you set that up.

INT. LIVING ROOM - VACANT UNIT - DAY

Thuds, heavy stomping and hard walking is heard above. Sheila and the staff worker both glance up at the ceiling.

SHEILA

Would you excuse me for a moment.

Sheila walks over to the base of the stairs, calls out --

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Guys! No running up there!

Sheila walks back over a little embarrassed.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

Sorry about that.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

You're fine. How are they handling everything?

SHEILA

From the sound of it, I'd say good.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

You haven't told them yet have you?

SHEILA

No, not the little ones. My oldest one knows, though.

Hailey sits against a bare wall, head down, plugged into her phone.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

Well I got some good news for you. Your credit check came back this morning. Not much history, but a 700 is a high enough score for us. If you decide to go forward with the lease, we'll waive the deposit. All you'll have to be concerned about is rent. And of course we'll pro-rate that amount depending on when you move in. How does that sound?

SHEILA

Amazing. Thank you so much.

(sighs)

All that's left is that dreaded talk.

The staff worker draws near. Hailey watches as her mother's hand is held by the staff worker.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

Look, I understand what you're going through. I've been there, I know it's not easy, but trust me a fresh start will be good for you and your children.

The staff worker gauges Sheila for a short beat.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)

Can I ask you something?

SHEILA

Yeah.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

What would you say to having a drink with me?

SHEILA

A drink? Like out somewhere?

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

(laughs)

That's usually how it works.

SHEILA

I don't know. Rob's SWAT and he's been getting more night calls lately...

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

Have your oldest, Hailey watch the kids. C'mon, I don't have many friends in the area. You seem friendly, was hoping we could get to know each other over a few drinks. My treat. It'll be fun.

THOMP-THOMP THOMP-THOMP THOMP-THOMP -- like a herd of raging bull, the young SIMS children come barreling down the stairs into Sheila's arms.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)

Just think about it, okay?

Sheila nods her head at the staff worker.

SHEILA

(spoken to children)

So, who thinks they could live here?

INT. HALL - ROB SIM'S HOME - DAY

At the end of a dark, narrow hall hankering for fresh paint is light emanating from inside a --

BEDROOM

Posters of Marvel heros line dirty, patched walls. Atop an old wooden chest, action figures stand ready for battle. A typical young boys bedroom. Kneeling down on one knee, Nigiel scours through his implicated luggage, unzipping every compartment.

END OF HALL MOMENTS LATER

Nigiel exits the bedroom, turns out the light. He walks down the hall fiddling with a cellphone as he passes by the --

KITCHEN

-- where Rob is pouring himself a glass of Southern Comfort. Rob spots Nigiel walking by.

ROB SIMS

Want a drink?

NIGIEL

No thanks. You coming down?

ROB SIMS

Yeah, I'll be down in a minute.

NIGIEL
Sounds good.

Nigiel heads downstairs. Rob leaves the kitchen, heads down the hall.

INT. SEDAN - CURBSIDE - NEIGHBORHOOD - SAME

The LOOKOUT peers through a set of binoculars.

BINOCULAR POV

We skim across a diverse class of homes, seemingly juxtaposed into a suburban neighborhood well passed its prime.

LOOKOUT
Ey you sure this is where the
stones are at?

The lookout lowers the binoculars, glances at Rush loading a full MAGAZINE into a RUGER 9mm.

RUSH
Yes, I'm sure. How many times do
you plan on asking me?

Once again, the lookout begrudgingly peers through the binoculars.

BINOCULAR POV

We hold on a two-story home suffering from years of neglect. On the second floor, Rob is visible through a bedroom window.

LOOKOUT
You said dude was a nigga, right?

RUSH
... Yeah, he's black. Look if you
see something, speak up!

LOOKOUT
I see a white dude. Looks like he's
looking for something. Probably our
fucking diamonds, I bet... Hold up!
We got trouble in the driveway.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - ACROSS TOWN - SAME

A black Ford Crown Vic sits parked a hundred yards from an abandoned warehouse.

CROWN VIC

Louis sets a pair of tactical binoculars on the dash. He seems agitated.

LOUIS
Something's wrong with the tracker,
we've been here for hours, there's
no movement, no nothing.

Aaron removes a pack of cigarettes from his suit jacket.

AARON
(offers a smoke to Louis)
Smoke?

Louis eyes Aaron with disdain.

LOUIS
How many times do I gotta tell you,
I don't smoke...

Aaron lights a cigarette.

AARON
Maybe you should.

LOUIS
Maybe you should quit.

Aaron grins.

AARON
Maybe your right...

Aaron exhales a thick cloud of smoke that drifts over into Louis's face. Louis quells his rage, rolls down the window.

LOUIS
You know it was approved this
morning... The transfer.

Louis glances to his right at Aaron.

AARON
I did not. Sounds like a
celebration is in order.

Aaron smokes away impervious.

EXT. CURBSIDE - LAGUARDIA AIRPORT - DAY

Jon slams the trunk of a luxury car, wheels two large bags up onto the sidewalk where his wife Christine waits.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
Look at my strong husband.

JON JOHNSON
A husband extremely grateful for
luggage with wheels.

Jon exhales. Christine smiles.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
I can stay, you know.

JON JOHNSON
What?? No... You need to go, he's
your brother. And besides, it was
probably just something I ate. I'm
better now.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
(beat)
That's true, you are better. I can
see it. I'm so proud of you
sweetie.
(moves close, kisses Jon)
Now if only my brother could learn
from you.

EXT. CAMPUS - FALLBROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL - VIRGINIA - DAY

An American flag at full-mast flutters in the wind.

TY (PRE-LAP)
What do you mean my positions been
filled?

OFFICE

Ty sits in an office, yelling across the desk at his boss
LARRY(45).

TY
The charges were dropped.

LARRY
I understand they were, but --

TY
But what?

LARRY
This is a school Mr. Sumat. You do
realize that... right?

TY

Mr. Sumat??? I've know you for five years Larry. You've always called me Ty.

Larry sighs, unfolds his arms, puts his hands together.

LARRY

Look Ty, even though the charges against you were dropped, there was a case. Which means somewhere a line was crossed. A line that this institution in no way can be associated with. You have to understand that. I'm sorry, there's nothing I can do.

Ty curls back in his seat, sighs.

TY

I should have never trusted the little bitch.

LARRY

Excuse me, what did you say?

Larry has had enough and slides over a final check.

LARRY (CONT'D)

I think it's best if you go now.

Ty takes his check, spits on the ground and storms out.

EXT. HOME - NEIGHBORHOOD - EVENING

Seen through a second floor bedroom window, a PUBESCENT GIRL changes into her pajamas. Down below, across the street, parked against the --

CURB

-- is a rusty grey --

PICKUP TRUCK

The driver-side window is rolled down. Inside, Ty blows out cigarette smoke while watching the young girl above.

INT. BASEMENT - ROB SIM'S HOME - DAY

A television flickers under muted light. Rob, lounging on a recliner, takes a break from shuffling through PASSED DUE BILLS, finishes off his drink, glances over at Nigiel fiddling with his phone.

ROB SIMS
Something wrong with your phone?

NIGIEL
... Yeah I can't get it to unlock.

A door opening upstairs is heard as are children's voices,
leading to small feet barreling down to the basement.

Nigiel looks up. The children run right past Rob.

NIGIEL (CONT'D)
Ey, you little rats, come here.

The children freeze with large smiles.

CHILDREN
Hey, we aren't rats!

Nigiel signals the children over with his index finger.

NIGIEL
So which one of you's been messing
with my phone, huh?

YOUNG BOY
Not me.

YOUNG GIRL
Uh-uh. He's lying uncle Nigiel.

YOUNG BOY
(spoken to his sister)
No I'm not!

YOUNG GIRL
(spoken to Nigiel)
But I saw him --

The young boy hits his sister.

YOUNG GIRL (CONT'D)
Ow!
(she retaliates)
That hurt...

Rob glances over at his children, does nothing.

NIGIEL
(spoken to boy)
Hey, don't hit your sister like
that!

YOUNG BOY
 (eyes welling up)
 But she's lying...

NIGIEL
 Doesn't matter. Lying doesn't make
 it okay to hit someone, especially
 your sister. Never lay your hands
 on a woman, alright?

The young boy nods his head 'yes'. Sheila descends down the staircase. Both her and Rob fail to recognize each other.

SHEILA
 (holding out cellphone)
 Hey Nigiel, your phone was in my
 purse.

NIGIEL
 That's not my phone.

SHEILA
 It's not mine. No one in this house
 owns an IPHONE besides Hailey, and
 she doesn't let that thing out of
 her sight.
 (evil eying children)
 Something tells me this didn't
 crawl inside my purse, did it??

NIGIEL
 If that's my phone, then who's
 phone is this?

Sheila looks askance to Rob.

INT. TABLE - LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - LATER DAY

The lookout speaks to Rush with food stuffed in his mouth.

LOOKOUT
 Yo, you think the kids found the
 phone yet?

INT. HALLWAY - ROB SIM'S HOME

Old wooden flooring creaks as Nigiel makes his way down the hall into --

JORDAN'S BEDROOM

Nigiel turns on the light, eyes his bag, then the mysterious phone in his hand.

INTERCUT:

RUSH

There's a possibility --

LOOKOUT

Possibility?? What the hell are we doing here? We need to get back over there!

RUSH

I was gonna say there's a possibility but I don't think he has, not yet...

Nigiel closes the door. Moves toward the bag, picks it up and sets it on top of Jordan's bed.

LOOKOUT

Rush, when are we gonna actually do shit instead of just thinking about doing shit, huh?? I need this money man.

Nigiel sits on a stool before the bed, begins searching through the bags many compartments.

RUSH

You think I don't know?? I'm in the same boat as you... but we both saw the cop car parked in the driveway. We gotta be smart. We're gonna get the diamonds. You'll get your money. Stop worrying.

Rush shakes his head.

RUSH (CONT'D)

You got your phone on you?

Nigiel empties everything out from the bag. Clothes, socks as well as both phones are strewn about on the bed. Nigiel sits back on the stool, befuddled. One of the phones begins to vibrate, a number flashes across the screen. Nigiel eyes the phone suspiciously.

ALEXUS (V.O. PRE-LAP)

Hello again.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Jon stands at the counter.

JON JOHNSON

Hello to you, too... Hey, I was wondering, is there a manager on duty?

Alexus's face goes flush.

ALEXUS

Uh, yeah he's in the back.

JON JOHNSON

Could you call him out? I would like to have a word with him.

ALEXUS

By any chance does this have something to do with me?

JON JOHNSON

Yes it does actually.
(short beat)
I want to ask him why he works you so hard.

Jon smiles. Alexis releases a sigh of relief, tucks her hair behind her ear.

ALEXUS

... Oh.

JON JOHNSON

So... why does he work you so much?

ALEXUS

It's not him, it's my doing actually. I'm green. The more hours I work, the quicker I can get over the learning curve.

(off Jon smiling)

That and my parents recently separated. My mom's having a hard time keeping up with all the bills so I picked up this part-time job that's not feeling so part-time anymore.

JON JOHNSON

Sorry to hear that.

ALEXUS

It's okay.

JON JOHNSON

If it makes you feel better, you make a fantastic Vanilla Latte. The other cup was for a friend, but I couldn't resist, drank them both on my way home.

ALEXUS

Thank you. That does make me feel better. I was actually a little nervous when I made yours.

JON JOHNSON

Yeah? Why's that?

ALEXUS

I don't know. To me you seem so put together. The clothes you wear. The expensive car you always pull up in.

JON JOHNSON

So you're watching me, huh?

ALEXUS

(smiling)

I just don't want to make something that's not to your liking.

JON JOHNSON

(grinning)

I'm not that hard to please.

ALEXUS

(smiling beat)

So what do you do that makes you so well put together, Jon without the H?

Jon flashes his pearly whites at Alexis, then hands over his business card.

JON JOHNSON

In case you ever find yourself in trouble, Alexus with a U.

Alexis takes the card, looks it over.

ALEXUS

Wow, you're a lawyer. Makes sense now.

JON JOHNSON
Believe me, it's not everything
it's cracked up to be.

ALEXUS
Are you a good lawyer? Like do you
win many cases?

JON JOHNSON
Let's put it this way, I've yet to
lose.

Alexus smiles, Jon looks up at the menu.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
So, I was thinking I'd try
something different today. You
know, mix it up a little. Besides
you and your Lattes, what else here
is irresistible?

EXT. FENCED IN BASKETBALL COURTS - DAY

THREE TEENAGE BLACK males are playing a game of *rough house*.
Antonio is among them. Upon seeing Maurice drag his way
around the outside of the fence everyone stops.

ANTONIO
Ey yo hold ball. Look who it is
ya'll.
(spoken to Maurice)
What up M! What you walking now??
Where's the whip??

Maurice, rage in his eyes, cuts through an opening in the
fence, beelines it straight for Antonio. One of the males,
SHAWN(17) cuts off Maurice before he is able to get to
Antonio.

SHAWN
Whoa whoa whoa, Maurice, chill,
chill man!

MAURICE
Let go of me!

The other black male, NICK(18), holds back a combative
Antonio.

ANTONIO
Let him through! Let the pussy
through!
(spoken to Maurice)
(MORE)

ANTONIO (CONT'D)
 Coming at me all hot and shit,
 let's go! I'm right here bitch!

SHAWN
 Shut the fuck up Ant! Hold him back
 Nick!

Maurice struggles to get at Antonio.

SHAWN (CONT'D)
 Maurice. Maurice, look at me man!
 Look at me!
 (gains Maurice's
 attention)
 What's up man? Why you so heated?
 What happened?

MAURICE
 Ask that mutha fucka!

EXT. PARK - LATER DAY

Shawn and Maurice are sitting on a park bench talking.

MAURICE
 It's not even really about the
 money... or Ant. Ant's gonna be
 Ant, ya know...

Shawn scoffs.

SHAWN
 I know what he's like, so does
 Nick. But it seems like you don't.

MAURICE
 I know and it's on me this time...
 (sighs)
 Shit man... You should have seen
 Oren's face.

SHAWN
 Was he that mad?

MAURICE
 Na, he wasn't mad. He was more
 like... defeated, you know?

SHAWN
 Na man, I'm not following you.

MAURICE
 It's like I could have been
 arrested again, you know.
 (MORE)

MAURICE (CONT'D)
 Could of had that bracelet put back
 on my ankle and Oren would have
 just lectured me like he always
 does. *Why you always taking the
 fall*, ya know shit like that.. But
 he didn't do any of that...

Shawn looks at Maurice surprised.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
 ... He just asked for his money
 back, told me I needed to get a
 job.

INT. BATHROOM - LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - EARLIER DAY

Maurice stands before a cracked mirror trying on his new
 uniform, not far from a yellow mop bucket filled with old
 water. Inside a cockroach scurries for it's life.

BACK OFFICE - SAME

MR. LUI(53), a bespectacled, Chinese man with a diamond ring
 on his finger, examines Maurice's ID card at close range
 while talking on the phone.

MR. LUI
 (spoken over the phone in
 Chinese)
 Do whatever you have to.

A knock is heard at the door. Mr. Lui hangs up the phone.

MR. LUI (CONT'D)
 (thick Chinese accent)
 Come in.

The door opens. Mr. Lui looks up at Maurice.

MR. LUI (CONT'D)
 Ah, Maurice, uniform look very
 good.

MAIN FLOOR

Maurice surfaces from the back. He removes his uniform as he
 passes the table where the lookout and Rush are seated.

INT. SEDAN - CURBSIDE - CHINESE RESTAURANT - SAME

Oren waits behind the wheel, texting on his phone. Maurice
 exits the restaurant. Oren looks up, honks the horn.

TABLE - MAIN FLOOR

The lookout glances back over his shoulder at Maurice entering the BMW.

LOOKOUT

How dem niggas afford that shit?

Rush ends the call, sets the phone down on the table. The lookout brings his attention back to Rush.

LOOKOUT (CONT'D)

No answer?

Rush exhales heavily.

LOOKOUT (CONT'D)

How long do you plan on playing these games man?

INT. KITCHEN TABLE - ROB'S HOME - LATE NIGHT

Nigiel sits hunched over his computer, covertly scrolling through images of rough diamonds.

SHEILA O.S.

They're you are.

Nigiel slams his laptop shut, looks at Sheila startled.

SHEILA

Uh... Are you alright?

NIGIEL

Jesus Sheila, I thought you were someone else...

Nigiel exhales, massages the bridge of his nose. Sheila walks across the kitchen, opens the refrigerator.

SHEILA

I'd like to think I'm the only 35 year old woman parading around this house, but sadly I have my doubts.

NIGIEL

What?? What are you talking about?

SHEILA

Nevermind. So what are you still doing up?

NIGIEL

Couldn't sleep.

SHEILA
Me, too. Anything you wanna talk
about, need help with?

NIGIEL
No, I'm good. You?

Sheila pulls out a bottle of hard liquor.

SHEILA
(examines the bottle)
I will be soon.

NIGIEL
Sheila, you think that's a good
idea? It's almost one o'clock in
the morning.

Sheila moves toward the cupboard, reaches at a high shelf.

SHEILA
Define good. Is it morally
excellent?... Probably not. Is it
right for this moment?...
Absolutely.
(glances back at Nigiel)
Interested?

NIGIEL
Hell, why not.

Sheila pulls out a second glass, sets them on the table and
walks to the fridge.

SHEILA
Ice?

NIGIEL
Please.

SHEILA
If I tell you something you gotta
promise not to judge.

NIGIEL
Just to let you know, I'm horrible
at keeping promises.

SHEILA
That makes two of us.

Sheila and Nigiel laugh. Sheila begins filling each glass.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
I bought this bottle two days ago.
From that liquor store on the
corner.

NIGIEL
Two days ago, are you kidding me?
Sheila, it's almost empty.

SHEILA
Not quite --
(pouring beat)
There, now it's empty your HONOR.

NIGIEL
Never knew my sister was such a
booser.

Sheila smiles, raises her glass.

SHEILA
Shut up. What shall we toast to?

Nigiel grins, shrugs his shoulders.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Hmm, how about to... to curveballs?

Nigiel holds his glass up high.

NIGIEL
Okay, to curveballs.

NIGIEL/SHEILA
Cheers!

They toast. Sheila downs her entire glass in seconds.

SHEILA
Smooth.

Nigiel struggles, eventually finishes.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
How'd you like it?

Nigiel's pained expression tells Sheila all she needs to
know.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Yeah, it takes some getting used
to. So will our new home. I'm
leaving Rob.

Nigiel chokes on Sheila's shocking news.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
Hell of a curveball, huh?

INT. L-SHAPED DESK - BULL PEN - POLICE DEPARTMENT - MORNING

Two officers escort a sexy CALL GIRL through the bull pen. Aaron sits at his desk, reviewing surveillance images, not far from Louis who boxes up the last of his possessions.

LOUIS
Take care of yourself.

After no response from Aaron, Louis walks off.

HECTOR (O.S.)
Mi hermano! Que paso wey!

Aaron lifts his head, turns toward HECTOR(30's), a crude, thick accented Latin officer, approaching with a file box in hand.

Hector sets the box on the desk, looks back at the call girl.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
Aye Dios mio. I'm liking this side of the office already.

Aaron glances at the call girl.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
If that was me with a piece of ass like that, you better believe I'd take full advantage of her services before hauling her in. What was rule number they taught us in the academy? Good evidence must first be processed, no?

Hector smiles. Aaron grins, shakes his head.

AARON
Guess I skipped that chapter.

Lieutenant Steve Grum walks across the bull pen toward his office.

AARON/HECTOR
Morning Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM O.S.
Bates, in my office, now!

LIEUTENANTS OFFICE

Aaron shuts the door, takes a seat before the Lieutenants Mahogany desk. Lieutenant Grum folds his arms, gives Aaron a hard staring.

AARON

Was there something you needed to see me about Lieutenant?

Lieutenant Grum pulls open a drawer, sets a WIRE TAP on top of the desk.

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM

Found it early this morning right outside the station.

AARON

(taken aback)

... Lieutenant, I can explain.

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM

You're in luck. This Rush character already did the explaining for you.
(off Aaron's furrowed brow)

Left next to the device was a hand written note. Believe it or not, he quoted James Madison's introduction of the Fourth Amendment in response to the writs of assistance. Quite beautifully I might add. Perhaps you should read it. Seems our smuggler knows more about the law than you do.

Lieutenant Grum inserts a USB memory stick into his laptop.

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM (CONT'D)

Come around this way, I want to show you something.

Aaron walks to the other side of the desk, stands beside Grum with his arms folded.

COMPUTER SCREEN

Fuzzy surveillance video shows a man, ostensibly Rush, approach the baggage claim.

AARON

When did you get this?

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM
 Came in this morning.
 (short beat watching
 video)
 See that in his hand? It looks like
 a cell phone, no? Image yourself in
 Rush's shoes. Why would you put a
 cell phone in a random bag?

AARON
 (thinking beat)
 The only thing I can think of would
 be... ... Shit!

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM
 That was my sentiments exactly.
 (pointing at screen)
 This poor guy here and what looks
 to be his aging mother were made
 into mules without ever knowing.

Lieutenant Grum stops the video, opens up a manila folder.

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM (CONT'D)
 We still need compelling evidence
 before we can make a smuggling case
 against Rush. The video alone
 simply isn't enough to prove that
 Rush in fact smuggled anything
 besides the few cheap souvenirs we
 found in his bag.
 (hands over stack of
 papers)
 Here's the passenger manifest.

Aaron takes the stack of papers.

LIEUTENANT STEVE GRUM (CONT'D)
 My guess is our uniformed mules are
 in town visiting family. Find out
 who they are and where they are
 staying and get a team over there
 ASAP before Rush does.

L-SHAPED DESK - BULL PEN

Hector leans back in his desk chair, enjoying a personal
 call.

HECTOR
 (spoken into phone)
 It's busier, doesn't mean I can't
 be out of here by seven and in you
 by seven fifteen.
 (MORE)

HECTOR (CONT'D)
(listening)
Ha-ha, you always knew I was nasty.

Hector watches Aaron exit the lieutenants office.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
(spoken into phone)
But hey baby, I gotta go.
(listening)
Bye.

Hector leans up in his chair, hangs up the phone. Aaron walks over, drops the Passenger Manifest on the desk.

HECTOR (CONT'D)
What's this?

Hector flips through several pages.

AARON
The passenger manifest for US flight 795. Cross check every name on that list. I need to know who on that flight is visiting from out of town.

HECTOR
There's like four hundred names here.

AARON
Narrow it down to two. The flight in was a connecting flight from Phoenix, so look for a couple, a mother most likely divorced, traveling with her adult son with round-trip flights back to Phoenix. The mother also appeared to be handicapped so check who pre-boarded the plane. I doubt the son's married so most likely his name hasn't changed. I need you to pinpoint BLACK last names.

Hector laughs.

HECTOR
Are you serious?

AARON
Do you find something funny?

HECTOR

Just not sure I know what a black name exactly is...

AARON

You have friends that are black, right?

HECTOR

I got a few.

AARON

Well, there you go.

Hector scoffs.

HECTOR

Wow... Aight. How soon do you need it?

AARON

Twenty four hours ago.

INT. SUPERMARKET - EVENING

Nigiel is hunched over, pushing a shopping cart down a long isle. To his left, Sheila languidly peruses the shelves.

NIGIEL

When are you gonna tell them?

SHEILA

Hopefully this weekend. Rob's been getting a lot more Swat calls lately, so he said he'd let me know.

NIGIEL

Wait, so Rob knows you're leaving him?

Sheila chuckles.

SHEILA

Yeah he knows! He's all for it. He's ready for me to leave as much as I am. This should have happened a long time ago Nigiel. We are two completely different people. He just doesn't know I've already found a place.

Nigiel exhales a heavy breath. Sheila smiles.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

The transition will be smooth, I promise, don't worry.

NIGIEL

(short beat)

How do you think Maya and Jordan will handle everything? You think they can feel something's up?

Sheila grabs two cartons of macaroni from the shelf.

SHEILA

You think two boxes will be enough?

NIGIEL

Should be.

Sheila places the cartons in the cart.

SHEILA

This may sound bad, but I don't think it will affect them at all. Not negatively. He's invisible to them. If anything, their relationship may improve.

NIGIEL

Or get worse.

SHEILA

Yeah, that's always a possibility. Guess what Jordan said to me the other day?

NIGIEL

What?

SHEILA

He said, mommy, why doesn't daddy hug you?

(off Nigiel's shocked look)

Jordan's earthy. I told him that daddy and I hug often, you just don't see it. It's a dark spirit in the house. They can feel it.

(humourously)

You know we don't sleep in the same bed anymore, right?

NIGIEL

Uh-uh, I did not know that.

SHEILA

Sorry, I must have told mom and not you.

NIGIEL

Damn Sheila, when did that start?

SHEILA

About a month ago. Between me and you Rob has some issues.

NIGIEL

Obviously, you're leaving him.

SHEILA

No, I mean he has a serious problem.

(moves in close)

He steals. A lot! Probably because he owes everyone. Nigiel Rob is drowning in debt. I have no idea where the money goes. There's barely enough to buy groceries sometimes.

NIGIEL

I got a little money saved up if you need some.

SHEILA

I appreciate that, but I'm good. Thank God my name isn't on anything, so I qualify for some government assistance.

(laughs)

That's how this is getting paid for.

Nigiel is despondent, shakes his head.

SHEILA (CONT'D)

It's gonna be okay Nigiel. You know what, let's change the subject, what's done is done. What's left on the list?

Nigiel slowly unfolds a piece of paper. CLOSE UP of several items crossed off except for the word 'coffee'.

EXT. BACKSIDE COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

A metal door is pushed open. Out walks Alexis, keys in hand, apron still draped over her neck.

She quickly walks past an eerie dumpster, the cool night air causes her to caress her arms as she heads toward her sedan, parked in an empty, shadowy --

PARKING LOT

Alexus cautiously approaches her lone sedan, making sure she too, is alone.

Alexus unlocks the door, enters the --

SEDAN

Alexus leans back in her seat, sighs heavily after a long day on her legs. She then straightens up, removes her apron from around her neck, puts the key in the ignition. Alexis cranks the engine several times before realizing the car is completely dead.

ALEXUS

Great...

Alexus reaches over, grabs her purse from the passengers seat. Unable to see inside, Alexis pushes against the interior lights above -- but the lights are dead as well.

A door slammed shut is faintly audible. Alexis looks up, sees the MANAGER locking up the back door. The manager wiggles the locked knob, puts the keys in his pocket, looks up and notices Alexis has yet to leave.

I/E. SEDAN

Alexis opens the car door as the manager approaches.

MANAGER

Look, I'd love to give you more hours but then I'd be breaking child labor laws. And quite frankly, I ain't built for prison.

Alexis smiles as does the manager.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

What are you still doing here anyway?

ALEXUS

My damn car won't start. I tried turning the key but I get nothing.

MANAGER

Did you pop the hood?

ALEXUS
Uh-uh, could you?

MANAGER
Alexus, you know I'm Mr. Public
transportation. You don't want me
anywhere near your engine. Is there
someone you can call?

Alexus hesitates for a prolonged beat before responding.

ALEXUS
I can call my dad.

MANAGER
Are you sure?

ALEXUS
Yeah.

MANAGER
Okay, cool. Want me to wait with
you til he gets here?

ALEXUS
It's already nine forty five. Isn't
your last bus at ten?

The manager checks his watch.

MANAGER
Shit you're right!

ALEXUS
You better hurry.

MANAGER
You sure you're gonna be okay?

ALEXUS
Yes. Go I'll be fine. I'm a
superhero remember?

MANAGER
Ha-ha. Yeah that's right. Bet you a
hundred bucks your friend Chester
would come pick you up in a
heartbeat.

ALEXUS
Hmm, maybe I should call him.

MANAGER
No, that's a horrible idea.

Alexus chuckles, rolls her eyes.

ALEXUS

Jeeze, I'm not gonna call him.

MANAGER

Alright. Well I gotta go. Make sure you lock your doors. I don't want to read about a missing girl in the paper tomorrow.

ALEXUS

Ha-ha. See you tomorrow.

MANAGER

Laaater.

The manager hustles off, almost instantly disappearing into the shadowy night. Alexis closes the door, glances around for a bit before digging into her purse and pulling out Jon's card.

EXT. SEDAN - AN HOUR LATER

The hood is propped open. Jon dressed in street clothes leans over the engine, tweaking various components.

JON JOHNSON

Try it now.

INTERCUT:

INT. SEDAN - SAME

Alexis turns the key.

JON JOHNSON O.S.

Anything?

ALEXUS

Uh-uh, nothing.

Jon grunts, continues making adjustments. CLOSE UP of a terminal disconnected from a corroded battery.

JON JOHNSON

Try it one more time.

(waiting, listening)

Still nothing?

END INTERCUT.

INT. MOVING - LUXURY SEDAN - 30 MINUTES LATER

Alexus sits in the passengers seat, admiring Jon's car.

ALEXUS
It's so quiet.

JON JOHNSON
Want me to turn on some music?

ALEXUS
No I meant your car rides so nice
and quiet. Doesn't even feel like
we're moving.

Jon smiles while maintaining his focus on the road.

ALEXUS (CONT'D)
(beat)
I want you to know I really
appreciate you coming.

JON JOHNSON
Don't mention it, we're friends,
remember?

Alexus nods her head yes.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
I just hope you can forgive me...

ALEXUS
For what?

JON JOHNSON
For being such a sorry mechanic.

Jon glances at Alexis, flashes his million dollar smile.

ALEXUS
I forgive you.
(beat)
Only because you're handsome.

Alexis eyes Jon, at the same time she looks down at her
VIBRATING PHONE.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIBRARY - NIGHT

Maria stands on the steps of the library, phone pressed
against her ear, looking around concerned about the
whereabouts of her daughter.

MARIA
 (whispered into the phone)
 Alexis where are you, pick up the
 phone...

INT. FOYER - JON'S HOME - NIGHT

Jon locks the door, stands close by Alexis.

ALEXUS
 Wow, you have an amazing home.

JON JOHNSON
 Feel free to treat it as if it were
 your own.

Jon and Alexis share an intimate beat. Jon draws in close, testing the waters. He then slowly presses his lips against Alexis's who willingly accepts. Jon pulls back, they both smile.

ALEXUS
 Wow.

Jon begins to walk off toward the kitchen.

JON JOHNSON
 Something to drink?

INT. LIVING ROOM - ALLEN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Allen walks into the living room holding two beers, hands one to Jennifer, takes a seat beside her on the sofa.

JENNIFER
 Thanks.

ALLEN
 Yup.

JENNIFER
 So... About the other day...

INT. KITCHEN - ROB'S HOME - NIGHT

Sheila walks into the kitchen dressed for a night out on the town.

NIGIEL
 Where you going all dressed up?

Nigiel sits in front of his computer at the kitchen table, between the children who are doing their homework.

YOUNG GIRL
(looks up)
Wow, you look beautiful mommy.

SHEILA
Aw, thank you sweetheart.

The young boy chimes in.

YOUNG BOY
Hey, where do you think you're
going missy?

Nigiel laughs, jokingly slaps his nephew on the back of his head.

YOUNG BOY (CONT'D)
Hey! What you do that for?

Nigiel playfully throws up his fists.

NIGIEL
C'mon, put up your dukes little
man!

SHEILA
(spoken to son)
Mom is going out with a friend
tonight my little BIG man.

Sheila walks toward the edge of the table where Hailey sits sketching, and yanks out her earbuds.

HAILEY
Mom! What are you doing?? Gimme
those back!

SHEILA
How many times do have I to tell
you no earphones at the dinner
table!!

HAILEY
We're not even eating dinner!

SHEILA
Doesn't matter.

HAILEY
But --

SHEILA

But nothing! -- Now I need you to make sure Maya and Jordan get a bath before bed. Okay?

(waiting)

O-k-a-y?!

HAILEY

Okay. God...

Nigiel shakes his head at Hailey's behavior.

SHEILA

Nigiel did mom mention when she'd be back?

INT. L-SHAPED DESK - BULL PEN - POLICE DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Hector reads off of a printout as he approaches Aaron.

HECTOR

Janette Watson, sixty four years of age, originally from Jamaica Queens. A retired Drug and Alcohol Street Intervention specialist who now lives with her thirty year old son Nigiel Watson in Phoenix, not far from the Mayo Clinic where Janette in fact had both knees replaced several years ago due to severe Rheumatoid arthritis.

(takes a breath)

Not a very black last name, but pretty handicapped if you ask me.

AARON

Let me see that.

Hector hands the printout over to Aaron.

HECTOR

I was also able to contact the airline in Phoenix, spoke to a female crew member who says she distinctly remembers an elderly woman accompanied by a young male pre-board the plane.

AARON

Any idea of where they're staying?

HECTOR

Yeah, think I do.

AARON

I don't need you to think Hector, I need you to know.

HECTOR

How's this, I'm 99 percent confident Nigiel and his mother are staying with Janette's daughter, Sheila. They live about ten miles from here on the South-side. But listen to this, Janette's daughter's last name isn't Watson. It changed when she got married.

AARON

To what?

HECTOR

Sims.

AARON

Sims??

(thinking beat)

Why does that name sound so familiar?

HECTOR

Because her husband bleeds blue just like you and I.

AARON

He's a cop??

HECTOR

From this precinct. Handles security over at Saint Francis Elementary School.

Aaron's eyes widen.

AARON

Son of a bitch, the diamonds were right under our noses all along!

(short beat)

Get officer Sims on the phone right away.

Aaron jumps up from his desk.

AARON (CONT'D)

Better yet, we'll call him on the way.

Aaron tosses car keys at Hector.

AARON (CONT'D)
You're driving.

BINOCULAR POV

Sheila shuts the front door, walks across the yard toward her SUV parked in the driveway.

INT. BASEMENT - ROB SIM'S HOME

A big screen television is on. Not far from a sofa where a flip phone caught between cushions LIGHTS UP.

STAIRCASE

Rob, in SWAT uniform, shot glass in hand, walks up loose stairs to the --

MEZZANINE LEVEL

He pulls back the curtains, peeks through the window, notices the family SUV pulling out of the driveway.

KITCHEN

Nigiel is still sitting between the children helping with homework. Hailey puts her earphones back in as Rob enters the kitchen.

ROB SIMS
Any idea where Sheila's headed off to?

HAILEY
(under breath)
Probably meeting up with her new girlfriend.

Nigiel shakes his head at Hailey.

NIGIEL
She just said she was going out with a friend. Didn't mention who.

The young girl looks up, smiles at her daddy.

YOUNG GIRL
Daddy, I only have two math problems left and then I'm all finished with my homework!

YOUNG BOY
Me, too!

ROB SIMS
That's awesome guys.

Rob walks toward the sink, places the shot glass inside.

NIGIEL
You working tonight?

ROB SIMS
Yeah man. I'm exhausted.

NIGIEL
I bet. Wish I could go in for you.

Rob smiles.

ROB SIMS
Me, too.

Rob walks over toward the little ones, rubs their heads.

ROB SIMS (CONT'D)
Alright, you guys be good.
(spoken to Nigiel)
See you in a few hours bro.

NIGIEL
See ya.

BINOCULAR POV

The front door opens, out steps Rob.

INT. PARKED SEDAN - SAME

Seated at the wheel, the lookout peers through a pair of binoculars.

LOOKOUT
Yo, you won't believe this?

RUSH
What?

LOOKOUT
A few minutes ago the wife stepped out, and now the cop is, too. Looks like he's going to work.

RUSH
Sounds like it's time for us to do the same.

EXT. FREEWAY - SAME

A black Crown Vic speeds through traffic.

BLACK CROWN VIC

Hector drives recklessly. Aaron holds the phone to his ear, grips the handle above the door for stability.

HECTOR
Still no answer?

AARON
Shit!

Aaron flips the phone shut, sways in his seat.

AARON (CONT'D)
Jesus, I thought Asians were the
only ones who couldn't drive?

HECTOR
Who told you that?

INT. BEDROOM - CHLOE'S HOME - SAME

Two bodies frolicking under white sheets, suddenly pause.

OREN (O.S.)
What's wrong?

CHLOE (O.S.)
Did you hear that?

Chloe folds back the sheets. Both her and Oren are stark naked.

OREN
Hear what?

CHLOE
Think my parents are home.

The faint sound of car doors closing is heard by both.

EXT. PARKED SEDAN - SAME

Rush and the lookout, both armed, stealthily creep around the parked sedan like ninjas.

RUSH
Take the back. I'll go in through
the front.

INT. KITCHEN - LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - SAME

A CHINESE SERVER adds a tray of dirty plates to an already mountain of dishes piled up beside a dejected, sweaty Maurice.

INT. BEDROOM - CHLOE'S HOME

Chloe looks out the window down at the driveway where her parents are pulling luggage out from the trunk of their car.

CHLOE
Hurry, hurry, hurry!

OREN
Baby, I'm moving as fast as I can.

Oren frantically gets dressed.

CHLOE
Not fast enough. They're coming in now.

Oren pulls his shirt over his head, smiles.

OREN
Maybe this is a good time for us all to finally meet.

CHLOE
Are you serious?? You'd meet them like this?

Oren shrugs his shoulders.

OREN
Why not?

CHLOE
Cause it would jeopardize any chance of them being cool with me dating a black guy, that's why.

THE FAINT SOUND OF A DOOR OPENING IS AUDIBLE.

MOTHER (O.S.)
Chloe, we're home!

CUT TO:

INT. FRONT DOOR - ROB SIM'S HOME - SAME

Rush slowly cracks open the front door, pokes his head inside, hears the distant sound of water running and children's voices.

HAILEY (O.S.)
Jordan, Maya c'mon, hurry up and
get in the tub.

Rush slides into the home, gently closes the door.

YOUNG GIRL (O.S.)
We're coming!

Bare feet pound against wooden flooring as the children barrel down the hall above.

HAILEY (O.S.)
Ill Jordan, stop touching it.

The young girl laughs.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
(embarrassed voice)
What? It itches...

Rush ducks and hides between the staircase leading down to the dark basement.

HAILEY (O.S.)
Gross. Make sure you clean that,
too. I'll be back in fifteen
minutes.

The bathroom door closes. Rush waits for Hailey's footsteps to fade away before making his way upstairs.

INT. 2ND FLOOR HALLWAY - CHLOE'S HOME - SAME

Oren peeks over the railing at Chloe greeting her PARENTS by the front door.

CHLOE
Hey, what are you two doing back so
early?

MOTHER
(perturbed)
It seems your father here has
forgotten our anniversary.

FATHER
(frustrated)
You keep saying forgotten. I didn't
forget, I just got the weekends
mixed up.

Chloe's mother rolls her eyes.

MOTHER
Mixed up is just as bad as
forgotten.
(spoken to Chloe)
Anyway we tried calling you, is
your phone off?

CHLOE
Yeah, the battery died.

Chloe's father drops the luggage on the ground.

FATHER
I'm going to die if I don't get
some food in me. I'll be in the
kitchen.

MOTHER
Dying wouldn't be the worst thing
that's happened!

Chloe's father throws his arms in the air, walks off toward
the kitchen. Upstairs Oren covers his mouth, tries not to
laugh.

CHLOE
Mom!

MOTHER
Don't mom me. Talk to your father.
He's the one that messed up!

CHLOE
Mom!!
(staring beat)
Mooom...

MOTHER
What?

CHLOE
Be nice to dad. He tried, didn't
he?

MOTHER

Right now, I'm too angry to be nice.

(deep exhale)

I need to go lie down.

Chloe's eyes widen as her mother begins climbing up the stairs. Chloe urgently gestures for Oren to go back into her room. Oren backs away from the railing, just as a LOUD CRASH rings out from the kitchen. Chloe's mom stops in her tracks, breathes out heavily then walks back down the stairs.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

I'm only doing this because you know what happens when your father's left alone in the kitchen.

Chloe exhales a sigh of relief as her mother makes her way to the kitchen. Chloe then waves Oren to hurry downstairs.

EXT. BACKYARD - ROB'S HOME - SAME

The LOOKOUT creeps up several stairs to a wooden deck. He peers through a sliding glass door with the blinds open at Nigiel in the --

KITCHEN

Nigiel looks tired, squeezes the bridge of his nose at the same time a knock is heard at the back door. Nigiel looks up, squints, sees the LOOKOUT smiling and waving his arms neighborly-like.

NIGIEL

...Hello?? Can I help you?

LOOKOUT

It's me, your neighbor from next door.

Nigiel furrows his brow.

NIGIEL

Oh, uh, this isn't my house man. I'm just visiting.

LOOKOUT

Oh... Okay... Well...

In the bg Rush slithers into the kitchen. Nigiel grimaces at the LOOKOUT peculiarly.

NIGIEL

... So, you wanna come back later?

Nigiel tenses up once a gun is pressed against his neck.

RUSH
No, I think we'll stay. Unlock the door.

Nigiel slowly unlocks the door, lets the Lookout in.

RUSH (CONT'D)
Beside the children, anyone else in the house I need to know about?

NIGIEL
No.

RUSH
Good. Now where's the bag?

NIGIEL
What --

RUSH
Stop! Don't do that. We started off good. Don't ask a question that you already know the answer to... Now, I'm going to ask you again, where's the bag?

NIGIEL
In my nephews room.

RUSH
And where is his room?

NIGIEL
Last one down the hall on the right.

RUSH
Thank you.

Rush signals with his head for the lookout to go check the room.

RUSH (CONT'D)
Have a seat. This shouldn't take long.

Nigiel takes a seat at the table. Rush lowers the gun.

RUSH (CONT'D)
So, you enjoying your stay in New York?

INT. HIGH TABLE - BAR/LOUNGE - DOWNTOWN - NIGHT

Heads tilted back, Sheila and the staff worker throw back full Margaritas in one sitting. The staff worker finishes first, slams down her glass.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
That's it girl! Show that drink
who's boss! Ha-ha!

Sheila finally finishes, slams down her glass, accidentally BREAKS it.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)
(eying the broken glass)
Damn!

SHEILA
Shit...

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
It's a good thing I don't work for
you.

SHEILA
It was an accident.
(waves over bartender)
Excuse me! Excuse me bartender!
(spoken to self)
God why do I have to be so
clumsy...

Sheila grabs several napkins, scoops ice and broken glass into a pile.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
Leave it girl. Give the cute
bartender an excuse to come over.

A handsome young male bartender comes over, cleans up the mess.

SHEILA
I'm so sorry about this...

WAITER/BARTENDER
Don't worry about it, it's cool.
Really. I've seen much worse,
believe me.

SHEILA
Just so embarrassing...

The bartender grabs a piece of broken glass.

WAITER

See that? Look what it says.
 (off Sheila's glance)
 Made in China. Cheap shits
 literally manufactured to self
 destruct.

Sheila smiles.

WAITER (CONT'D)

Think of it this way, it could of
 been much worse had the glasses
 been full.
 (smiling beat)
 (spoken to both ladies)
 How about I get you ladies another
 round? On the house.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER

(spoken to bartender)
 You know my answer. I'm just
 getting started. It's up to her.

The staff worker and the bartender turn to Sheila.

WAITER

Sheila tells me you're going
 through a rough divorce right now.

Sheila eyes her staff worker friend as if to say 'really'.

SHEILA

... A separation.

WAITER

Whichever one it is, you owe
 yourself a good time... What's
 your soon to be separated husband's
 name?

SHEILA

Robert.

WAITER

I bet Robert isn't beating himself
 up right now like you are.

INT. BACK ALLEY - NIGHT

Rob lies in plain clothes amongst trash bags, beaten to a
 bloody pulp by TWO MASKED men rummaging through his pockets.
 One of the men pulls out a black sack from Rob's pocket,
 looks inside.

MASKED MAN

(spoken in Chinese)

Jackpot. Let's put this piece of
shit in the dumpster then get the
hell out of here.

The masked men toss Rob in a dumpster.

EXT. DUMPSTER - BACK OF LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - SAME

Maurice props open the door, walks outside carrying a large
black trash bag to the dumpster. Maurice throws the bag over,
then grudgingly returns inside.

INT. KITCHEN - ROB'S HOME - SAME

The lookout returns to the kitchen with the bag, hands it to
Rush. For a moment we watch as Rush searches every
compartment, finds neither phone nor diamonds. Nigiel's eyes
expand with panic.

NIGIEL

What the?? They were there the last
time I checked.

RUSH

When was the last time you checked?

NIGIEL

(nervous)

Uh, I, I don't know. A few days
ago, maybe.

RUSH

Maybe?

A SERIES OF HARD KNOCKS are heard at the front door.

AARON O.S.

Rob open up! It's detective Aaron
Bates. I am here with office
Rodriguez. We need to have a word
with you.

Rush puts his finger over his lips, motions for Nigiel to
keep quiet. The lookout positions himself in another room.

HAILEY'S ROOM

Hailey sketches in her pad. Punk rock blasts out from her
earphones.

BATHROOM

The children are in the tub, splashing water in each other's face.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - SAME

Aaron and Hector stand on opposite sides of the door, locked and loaded.

AARON
Mr. Sims, if you don't open up we
will come in!!

A crash is heard. The lights are cut. Aaron hand gestures for Hector to KICK IN THE DOOR.

EXT. PUBLIC BUS - BUS STOP - SAME

Mechanical doors slide open, releasing Oren, who continues his journey along the sidewalk on the phone.

OREN
And your parents are cool with
that?

INT. BEDROOM - CHLOE'S HOME - SAME

Chloe lies in bed, chatting with Oren on the phone.

CHLOE
My mom is. She's still not talking
to my dad so the sooner we do this
the better.

INTERCUT:

OREN
Ha-ha, wow... alright. Ah, wait,
you know what baby, I gotta pick up
the car tomorrow, remember?
(listening)
Can't I shoot over after?

Oren glances at his phone, there's an incoming call from Maurice.

OREN (CONT'D)
Hey baby, that's Maurice. Let me
call you back.
(listening)
Love you, too.

END INTERCUT.

Oren clicks over.

OREN (CONT'D)

Yo!

EXT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Maurice waits outside. In the bg, Mr. Lui's is dark and empty inside.

MAURICE

Where you at?

INTERCUT:

OREN

My bad, I'm coming right now.
Thought you were closing tonight?

MAURICE

We lost power. Closed twenty
minutes ago.

OREN

Word??

MAURICE

Hurry up.

OREN

I'll be there in five minutes.

MAURICE

Aight...

OREN

(short beat)
Ey Maurice.

MAURICE

What?

OREN

I'm proud of you.

MAURICE

... Just hurry up man.

END INTERCUT.

INT. FRONT DOOR - ROB SIM'S HOME - SAME

Childlike voices echo out as Aaron follows behind Hector.

AARON

Check upstairs. I'll check the
basement.

Hector navigates his way upstairs. Aaron slowly descends down
a small flight of stairs to the --

BASEMENT

-- where he shines a flashlight at an empty common area. To
his left are two doors. Aaron opens the first door, glances
inside at an vacant bathroom. Aaron opens the second door to
a garage packed with BROWN MOVING BOXES. As Aaron closes the
door SHOTS RING OUT from above. Aaron quickly darts upstairs
to the --

KITCHEN

Aaron peeks his head around the corner, sees Hector lying on
the floor moaning, shot in the chest.

AARON

Hector?? Hector are you alright? Is
it clear?!

HECTOR

Yeah... they went out the back.

Aaron enters the kitchen, drops to his knees, pulls out his
radio.

AARON

Hang in there buddy.
(spoken into radio)
This is 514, I have an officer
down. I repeat officer down,
requesting a medic.

Faint childlike murmurs of 'Hailey's' name wafts out.

HAILEY O.S.

(stunned)
... Oh my God...

Aaron turns around, points his flashlight and pistol in
Hailey's frightened, distraught face.

AARON

(exhales relieved)
We're police officers. I'm
detective Bates. Are you okay?
(off Hailey's nodding yes)
Good. Are you Hailey?

Hailey looks up at Aaron, nods her head yes.

AARON (CONT'D)

Is that your brother and sister calling you?

(off Hailey's nod yes)

Good, very good. Now I need you to go make sure they're okay, alright?

Hailey nods her head and runs down the hall.

AARON (CONT'D)

Hector did you get a good look at the shooter? Was it Rush?

HECTOR

No, it wasn't. There was another guy. Never seen him before.

Hailey returns to the kitchen.

HAILEY

They're okay.

Aaron looks up at Hailey.

HAILEY (CONT'D)

But I can't find my uncle?

INT. SEDAN - STREET - SAME

Nigiel lies in the backseat squirming - his mouth, hands and feet are wrapped in duct tape.

EXT. SEDAN - SAME

Rush stands outside by the car, arguing with the Lookout behind the wheel.

RUSH

What the fuck! You just had to shoot him, didn't you?!

LOOKOUT

Calm down! He ain't dead. I shot him so he wouldn't be on our asses.

RUSH

Calm down? Dead or not, you shot a fuckin cop! Do you understand what that means? Every cop on the east coast is gonna be looking for us now.

LOOKOUT

Anyway, it's done. All we gotta do now is get this little shit to tell us where the diamonds are.

RUSH

Oh that's it?? You got it all figured out, don't you?? Are you looking to go to war with the police? Cause I sure as hell ain't.

The lookout and Rush exchange fierce glances.

RUSH (CONT'D)

Take him back and stay put til I get there! Right now I need to think and you're not helping.

Rush begins to walk off. The lookout stares back sharply.

LOOKOUT

Ey Rush.

Rush stops, exhales in aggravated fashion.

RUSH

What??

LOOKOUT

I'll take it from here.

Before Rush has time to react, BULLETS rip gaping holes through his chest.

INT. UNMARKED PATROL CAR - STREETS - MINUTES LATER

Aaron cruises sleepy city streets, using the LED mounted on his sedan to spotlight every passing vehicle and meandering pedestrian.

STREETS - SAME

Oren rehearses for tomorrows big day with Chloe's parents as he walks through a city winding down.

Oren turns a corner excited about the future, but is halted in his tracks at the sight of a BODY several yards ahead, lying in the street. Oren looks around an empty block as he takes a wide berth toward the body.

OREN

(calls out)

Hey my man, you alright?

Oren's voice echoes out in ripples.

OREN (CONT'D)
 You know it isn't a real good look
 lying in the street like that.
 (spoken to self)
 Could get runover or something...

Oren nears the freshly murdered body of Rush. Oren bends down, grimaces at the sight of running blood.

OREN (CONT'D)
 Ah man damn, you been shot...

SUDDENLY BLINDING LIGHT is shined in Oren's face.

AARON
 FREEZE! DON'T MOVE! STAY WHERE YOU
 ARE AND PUT YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN
 SEE THEM!

Oren shields his eyes against the light with both hands as we

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. KITCHEN - MR. LUI'S CHINESE - DAY - MONTHS LATER

CLOSE UP of a neck tattoo that says *HARDER THAN STEEL*. Eyes lowered, facial expression marred by pain, Maurice rinses off soapy dishes.

MAIN FLOOR

Customers sit at tables chomping away at their meals. Mr. Lui, mumbling to himself in Chinese, flips through channels on a small TV atop a shelf.

Folding doors leading to the back kitchen open, out surfaces Maurice, head down - in direct route to the --

BATHROOM

Maurice steps to the toilet, unzips his fly and begins urinating. He closes his eyes, drops his head back, exhales until CACOPHONOUS SOUNDS take him back to the --

MAIN FLOOR

-- where infuriated customers pay their attention to the small --

TELEVISION SCREEN

Facial images of Oren and officer Aaron are displayed. Written below in white letters are the words: OFFICER ACQUITTED.

FEMALE NEWSCASTER O.S.

After four grueling months in a case marred by inadequate evidence, the jury has found Aaron Bates, the New York police officer previously charged in the fatal shooting of 23-year old, unarmed Oren Smart -- not guilty on all charges.

In the bg, on the steps of a Federal Court Building, reporters fight for comments from Officer Aaron Bates escorted out by security alongside his lawyer Jon Johnson.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Jennifer and Allen cuddle together on a small sofa watching TV. The news is replaying the shocking verdict from earlier.

JENNIFER

I never noticed that you and that cop have the same last name.
(looks up at Allen)
Kinda crazy, huh?

Allen's speechless. A cell phone on a coffee table begins to ring.

LATER NIGHT

Riled, Jennifer stands in the corner of the living room with her arms folded. Allen sits on the sofa talking on the phone.

ALLEN

(spoken into phone)
Yeah, I'll be on it tomorrow.
(listening)
Alright, bye.

Allen ends the call, lethargically looks up at Jennifer.

JENNIFER

You told me your father was dead.
Why'd you lie to me?

INT. KITCHEN - MAURICE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Antonio, wearing a thick jacket, looks inside a fridge with nothing but a carton of rotten milk.

ANTONIO

(yells out)

Damn M, every time I come over, you
ain't got shit in your fridge but
old ass milk.

Antonio slams the refrigerator door, walks into a --

LIVING ROOM

-- sans TV and barely enough furniture to accommodate Shawn
and Nick.

SHAWN

Yo what happened to your TV?

Antonio takes a seat on the couch beside Shawn.

MAURICE

(sighs)

My hours got cut back at work. Was
short on rent so I pawned it.

Shawn shakes his head, takes a deep breath.

ANTONIO

Look on the bright side, you still
got Oren's whip.

Maurice leaps to his feet, clenches his fists!

MAURICE

What the fuck did you say???

Shawn steps in between, tries to bring order.

SHAWN

Maurice chill, sit down! Be cool!

MAURICE

Na fuck being cool!! This nigga's a
fucking cancer. He's always messing
shit up! Oren's dead because of
him!

ANTONIO

You putting that shit on me??

MAURICE

You earned it!

Antonio stands up.

SHAWN

Sit down Ant!! Everybody just chill
out, alright?? Chill!... Damn...

After a short beat the room grows calmer. Maurice and Antonio
sit down, stare at each other like prize fighters.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

Look Maurice, you can't put Oren's
death on Ant, man. He cared about
Oren just as much as you did. We
all did.

MAURICE

Bullshit!! C'mon Shawn, you know
the only thing that mutha fucka
cares about is himself! If the car
wasn't being repaired from what he
did, Oren wouldn't have been on the
street that night!

ANTONIO

Hold up, hold up...

Antonio stands to his feet, paces around the room.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

Have you not seen the news M??

NICK

(spoken low)

Uh... He doesn't have a TV...

SHAWN

(spoken low)

Shut up Nick.

ANTONIO

The bitch ass police, the mutha
fucka you should be mad at got off
today!! Did you know that??

(beat)

I fucked up Oren's whip, that was
my bad. I should've taken
responsibility for that, but I
ain't the one that pulled the
trigger.

Maurice scoffs, lowers his head.

MAURICE

Didn't have to.

Antonio glares at Maurice --

ANTONIO

You know what you are M? A bitch!

Maurice jumps to his feet, reaches for Antonio who quickly pulls a SATURDAY NIGHT SPECIAL out from his waist, points it dead in Maurice's face.

SHAWN

Ant, what the fuck are you doing??

NICK

Yo man, put that away.

ANTONIO

Not a single mutha fucka would give a shit if I blasted you right now. Except for these two... But we all know I ain't gonna do that. I don't have it in me to kill an innocent person.

Antonio flips the gun around, hands it to Maurice.

ANTONIO (CONT'D)

But we all know who does.

INT. ELABORATE COMMON AREA - JON'S HOME - EVENING

Under the warmth of a fire, a dozen of the Johnson's intimate friends and family applaud Jon... The man of the hour.

JON JOHNSON

Thank you. Thank you so much everyone, thank you. Wow...

The applause slowly subsides.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

First of all, it would be a true injustice for me to not give a very, very special thank you to my lovely wife, friend, life partner and adjudicator here beside me... Christine.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

(smiling)

Someone has to hold him accountable.

The guests laugh. Jon extends his hand, Christine takes hold and rises to her feet. The room grows silent.

JON JOHNSON

Sweetheart, where would I be if it weren't for you? We've been through a lot together. Thank you for weathering the many storms my bad habits created. You enhance my life and I love you.

Jon and Christine share a long kiss. Guests cheer on the ostensibly perfect couple.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Now, uh, would everyone please take their glass in their hand and stand with me. I only want to see full glasses. Full glasses only. We have plenty more wine so...

Glasses are filled to the brim with more expensive wine. Jon notices Christine is without a glass.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)

Baby, where's your glass?

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

I'm going to take it easy tonight.

JON JOHNSON

Really? Is everything okay?

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

Everything's great.

All guests eventually stand to their feet. Jon takes a minute to gather his thoughts.

JON JOHNSON

This may come as no surprise to you all, but this verdict was a statement on many levels. We often forget that an officers principal duty is to protect himself at all times. In the heat of the moment so much is happening mentally and physically. What we see on the news or read about in the paper is just one small part of a much larger situation. During this case I took it upon myself to focus on every detail of what happen that night despite limited evidence, and I must say, it was exhausting. Not only for myself, but my team as well.

(MORE)

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 With that said, we were fortunate
 to have so many of you all rooting
 for justice... Thank God justice
 prevailed.

Jon raises his glass high.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 So without further adieu, it brings
 me great honor to say, I'm still
 flawless! 47 and 0 baby! Cheers!

Cheers and applause erupt. Jon throws back his entire glass
 as the DOORBELL rings.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
 (spoken to Jon)
 Think I heard the doorbell, I'll be
 right back.

JON JOHNSON
 Uh-uh, hold this.
 (hands glass to Christine)
 I'll get it, you stay here.

INT. FRONT DOOR - VESTIBULE - SAME

Jon staggers to the front, composes himself and opens the
 door without checking to see who it is. Standing outside in
 the --

FRONT ENTRYWAY

-- are TWO MEN in thick black coats.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON
 Mr. Johnson?

Near freezing outside, Jon folds his arms.

JON JOHNSON
 Yes?

The man speaking flashes his POLICE BADGE.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON
 I'm DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON. To my
 left is OFFICER DAVIS. May we have
 a word?

JON JOHNSON
 May I ask what this is about?

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON
Is there somewhere we can speak in
private?

JON JOHNSON
Um, as you can hear, I'm in the
middle of entertaining guests.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON
(listens in)
So it seems. Sorry for the
disturbance. How about we come back
in the morning, say 7?

JON JOHNSON
I should be up.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON
(staring beat)
Do you drink coffee, Mr. Johnson?

JON JOHNSON
(confused visage)
Uh... Yeah, on occasion.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON
Great. We'll pick you up a cup on
our way over. In case you aren't
fully awake by the time we arrive.

The officers turn and walk off. Jon eases his way back
inside.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON (CONT'D)
Oh and Mr. Johnson --

Jon pauses, Det. Hutchinson glances back over his shoulder.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON (CONT'D)
Congrats on the verdict.

Jon closes the door, rubs the back of his head as various
thoughts flood his brain.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON O.S.
Who was that at the door?

Jon turns, finds Christine standing in the FOYER with her
arms folded.

JON JOHNSON
(short beat)
It was -- it was the police.

Jon locks the door, walks toward Christine.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
The police? What could they have possibly wanted with you?

JON JOHNSON
I have no idea. They wanted to speak in private, but I said now wasn't a good time.

Christine eyes Jon for an awkward moment.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
What? I'm just as confused as you.

Christine wraps her arms around Jon, smiles and looks into his eyes.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
They probably just wanted to congratulate you again on a job well done.

INT. SUV - STUDENT DROP OFF - SCHOOL - EARLY MORNING

The weather is stifling cold and the sky a dull grey. Janette, a palpable sadness in her eyes, sits in the passengers seat looking like a moldering corpse.

SHEILA (O.S.)
You guys got everything?

Sheila looks back over the drivers seat at her children lethargically gathering their things before exiting the SUV.

SHEILA (CONT'D)
(spoken to children)
Have a good day. See you guys at 3.

YOUNG CHILDREN
Bye mom.

The young girl looks up front at her grandma Janette --

YOUNG GIRL
Bye grandma...

-- but after no response is pulled away by Hailey.

HAILEY
Come on.

Hailey slams the door. Sheila watches her children disappear into the school.

JANETTE

(short beat)

I shouldn't have left.

(sighs, shakes head)

Dear God, I should not have left.

Janette turns to Sheila with a look from the depths of disappointment.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

And neither should have you...

Sheila stares back, speechless.

JANETTE (CONT'D)

You still have not told me where you were that night. What could have been more important than the well-being of your family?

CUT TO:

INT. BARTENDERS BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - EARLY MORNING

Sheila, her body surprisingly well kept in only a brawl and panties, frantically gathers her things. Still asleep, lying naked in bed is the Bartender and the Female Staff Worker.

BACK TO SUV

Sheila lowers her eyes, ashamed to come out with the truth. Janette sighs, looks straight ahead with tired, watery eyes.

JANETTE

My son, my only son, your brother for crying out loud, has now been missing for four months. Four months Sheila. Only God knows where he could be... It's so cold these days. I wonder if he's warm, if he's eating enough food. He should have come home by now. Something's not right.

EXT. LANDFILL - OHIO - SAME DAY EARLY MORNING

Birds soar around mountains of noxious garbage. Gears grind as a Caterpillar TRASH COMPACTOR pushes garbage forward then backs up, partially exposing the BODY of Nigiel.

EXT. CURBSIDE - JON'S HOME - DAY

A black patrol car is parked alongside the curb.

OFFICE - SAME

Large windows let in natural morning light. Plaques, degrees and certificates cover the walls. Officer Davis stands before a large bookcase, perusing through Jon's extensive collection of literature.

OFFICER DAVIS

(reads cover of book)

Sex At Dawn. How we mate, why we
stray and what it means for modern
relationships.

Officer Davis looks up, nods his head at Jon seated across from Detective Hutchinson.

OFFICER DAVIS (CONT'D)

Sounds interesting. Mind if I
confiscate this?

(off Jon frowning)

I would ask to borrow it but, you
know once you loan out a book you
never see it again.

Jon sips his coffee, cracks a faint grin.

JON JOHNSON

... Sure.

Officer Davis walks toward the sofa, takes a seat beside Detective Hutchinson.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON

How's the coffee by the way?

JON JOHNSON

It's hot. -- So what's this all
about?

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON

The manager over at the cafe said
you would often order a Vanilla
Latte. Is that true?

FRONT DOOR - AN HOUR LATER

Jon escorts Detective Hutchinson and officer Davis out.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON

The junior high where Alexis is currently enrolled compiled a list of the names of students who they feel she was closest to. Over the next few days myself and officer Davis will be contacting those friends and their parents. For all we know she could be hiding out at one of their houses. You know, typical teenage rebellion.

Jon has mixed feelings and smiles perfunctorily.

JON JOHNSON

Yeah, let's hope that's all it is.

DETECTIVE HUTCHINSON

You've been a big help Mr. Johnson. Give us a call if you hear anything.

Jon holds up detective Hutchinson's card.

JON JOHNSON

Will do.

INT. GUEST BEDROOM - AARON'S HOME - EVENING

Atop a bed is an open suitcase. The sound of drawers being pulled open and slid shut is audible as Allen walks back over toward the bed.

JOYCE (O.S.)

Knock knock.

Allen turns, glances at Joyce standing by the door.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

How's the unpacking going?

ALLEN

Almost finished...

Allen pulls more clothes out from the suitcase, brings them to the dresser.

JOYCE

(short beat)

This room gets pretty cold at night. Feel free to help yourself to the extra comforter in the closet.

Allen continues unpacking in silence. Joyce exhales deeply.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

I know it wasn't easy coming back.

ALLEN

(sarcastic)

Yeah well, regrettably he is my biological father, remember?

JOYCE

(beat)

Right...

Allen pauses, looks at Joyce piercingly.

ALLEN

By the way where is he?

JOYCE

Class. Tuesday and Thursday nights he has counseling for PTSD.

(deep sigh)

He's a different man these days, Allen. Certainly isn't the man you remember growing up with. He doesn't sleep. Barely eats. Doctors say the best thing for him right now is to have his family close by. That's why I called you. Thought maybe you could help him.

INT. BATHROOM - LUI'S CHINESE REST. - CLOSING TIME - NIGHT

Maurice wets his face with water from a running faucet. He looks up at himself in the mirror. The cool feeling lasts but only a minute as nothing in his life is cool.

FLOOR

Maurice walks with his apron over his shoulder, pushes in a lone crooked chair.

MAURICE

Mr. Lui, I'm gone.

Mr. Lui counts money behind the counter, offers a short wave to Maurice who pushes against the glass door.

CHINESE SERVER O.S.

(chinese pronunciation)

Mau-wice!

Vexed, Maurice lowers his head, looks back over his shoulder.

CHINESE SERVER
No bus. I ride with you?

INT. BMW SEDAN - MOVING THROUGH CITY STREETS - NIGHT

Hip-hop plays low. Maurice watches the road ahead with steadfast eyes while the Chinese server sits in admiration.

CHINESE SERVER
Wow. Your car -- so cool *Mau-wice*.

Maurice grits his teeth, continues looking straight ahead.

INT. VESTIBULE - AARON'S HOME - LATER NIGHT

The front door is pushed open. A skinnier Aaron walks in and is instantly greeted by Joyce.

JOYCE
Hey, you're back early.

Aaron kisses Joyce on her cheek.

AARON
I was tired.

Aaron takes off his coat.

JOYCE
Here, let me take that.

Joyce takes Aaron's coat and hangs it in the closet nearby.

JOYCE (CONT'D)
How was class?

AARON
(deep sigh)
Long. Pointless as always.

JOYCE
That's not true.

AARON
When have I ever lied to you...

Joyce sighs, folds her arms, analyzing her husband.

AARON (CONT'D)
(glances up at the second
floor)
Did he make it in?

Joyce nods her head yes.

GUEST BEDROOM

Lying supine on the bed, Allen turns a page in a book he is reading.

AARON (O.S.)
 (short beat)
 Mind if I come in?

Allen looks up at Aaron framed in the doorway.

ALLEN
 (short beat)
 ... Sure.

Allen inserts a marker inside the book and sits up. Aaron pulls up a chair beside the bed. Both men exist in a moment of unsure silence.

INT. MOVING - BMW SEDAN - CITY STREETS - NIGHT

The ever troubling sound of a police siren rolls. Maurice looks up into the rearview mirror at flashing blue and red lights. Maurice pulls the sedan over. The cop car trails close behind, an LED light is shined in on Maurice's car. Maurice opens the glove compartment, rummages through, finds the GUN buried beneath junk. A white officer in sunglasses approaches the car, shines a light inside and taps on the window. Maurice rolls down the window.

OFFICER
 Any idea why I pulled you over?

Maurice stares at the officer, unresponsive, vengeful, liable to do something irreversible.

MAURICE
 ...Na, you tell me...

OFFICER
 You're driving with expired tags.
 That's against the law.

Maurice grins. The officer raises his sunglasses.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
 License and registration, son.

Maurice sharpens his eye at the officer. The officer waits, ever so discreetly, readies his hand.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
 You hear what I said, son? I need
 to see your license and
 registration.

Maurice looks over at the glove compartment and the partially
 exposed gun, ready for the taking.

Maurice reaches over, slides his hand under the junk. At the
 same time, the officer touches a speaker above his ear,
 listens as an order floods in.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
 (spoken into mic)
 10-4, I'm on my way!
 (spoken to Maurice)
 You're gettin' off easy tonight,
 kid. Don't let me catch you again
 with expired tags. Consider this a
 warning.

The officer hustles back to his sedan and blows by Maurice.

INT. BEDROOM - JON'S HOME - NIGHT

Christine is in bed with her back against the headboard,
 writing in her journal. Water gushing out from a faucet is
 heard, then there's silence. Jon exits the bathroom and turns
 out the light.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
 (looks up)
 Stomach again?

JON JOHNSON
 (terse)
 I don't know what it is.

Jon makes his way over to the bed. Christine closes her
 journal.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
 I'll schedule an appointment with
 Dr. Abrams tomorrow.

Jon gets under the covers, lies on his side.

JON JOHNSON
 Christine Dr. Abrams is insanely
 expensive for no reason.

Christine switches off the lamp, moves in behind Jon, begins
 kissing his neck.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
It's not like we can't afford it,
though.

Jon nudges Christine away.

JON JOHNSON
I take it you haven't noticed the
substantial amount of money missing
from our savings, huh?
(looks over at Christine)
Are you helping your brother out
again?

Christine pauses, processes Jon's words then angrily turns on
the light. Jon rolls over.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Christine, what are you doing?!

Christine gets out of bed, stomps over to the dresser.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
What am I doing?!

JON JOHNSON
YES, what are you doing?

Christine opens a drawer, TOSSES several magazines at Jon.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Jesus Christ woman, what the hell!

Jon looks at the SMUT magazines, sighs.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
Where did you get these?

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
Where did I get them?

JON JOHNSON
Yes, where did you get them, stop
repeating my questions!

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
I found them under the fucking
sink! You hid them there, remember?
Jesus Jon, I thought we beat this?

JON JOHNSON
Look, it's nothing, it's just -- ah
fuck it, you wouldn't understand
anyway.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

Excuse me, did you just say that I
wouldn't understand?? Me??

(beat)

Of all people I should be a Goddamn
expert when it comes to you and
this shit!

JON JOHNSON

Then why can't you just understand
that I have a problem??!!

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

...Understand??

Christine looks fixedly at Jon for a prolonged beat, takes a
deep breath.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON (CONT'D)

I'm going to ask you a question.

Please answer honestly.

(short beat)

Did you ever fuck her in our home?

CUT TO:

SHOWER - JON'S HOME - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Pressed against a steamy pane of glass are two female hands,
tensing up with every thrust passionately brought on behind
by Jon.

JON JOHNSON (V.O. PRE-LAP)

What???

BACK TO:

BEDROOM - JON'S HOME - PRESENT - NIGHT

Christine shakes her head, in disbelief at her husbands
unwillingness to tell the truth.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

... I see you take me for a fool.

JON JOHNSON

I honestly have no idea what you're
talking about!

CHRISTINE JOHNSON

You think I wouldn't find out, huh?

CUT TO:

MONTAGE:

Jon pushes on glass doors and exits his place of work.

Jon walks to his luxury sedan, enters. Shortly after, he drives off... as does another car.

Jon cruises down the freeway. Through the rearview mirror we see that Jon is being pursued by the same car from earlier.

Jon pulls into the coffee shop parking lot, waits. The vehicle in pursuit parks off in the distance, also waits.

Moments later Alexis exits through the back door of the coffee shop, looks around panicked, walks quickly toward --

JON'S SEDAN

Jon opens the door for Alexis. They kiss passionately.

JON JOHNSON

I missed you.

(off Alexis's scared look)

What's wrong?

ALEXUS

Are you certain no one knows about us? I feel like I'm being watched.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - PRESENT NIGHT

Maurice walks out from the store, holding something under his coat.

BLACK MAN (O.S.)

Damn moths! Get outta here!

Maurice glances to his right. The same kooky black man from before is sitting against a wall, wildly flailing his arms at several annoying moths.

Maurice laughs, shakes his head, moves on.

BLACK MAN (CONT'D)

(speaks slowly British accent)

Ey you wouldn't happen to have some extra change you could spare, would you?

MAURICE

Na man, I didn't get any change, sorry.

BLACK MAN

(short beat)

You wanna buy one of my sketches?

Maurice stops, glances back over his shoulder.

MAURICE

Didn't you hear what I just said? I ain't got no money, man.

The black man is persistent.

BLACK MAN

How about a trade? I'll give you two sketches for one of those bottles you're hiding.

MAURICE

What... You crazy man, you been out in these streets too long, you know that?

The black man looks around at his situation.

BLACK MAN

(under breath)

You're right about that...

(spoken to Maurice)

Well, it's good to see you're stealing for yourself now.

Maurice stops, turns and walks back over to the man.

MAURICE

What that fuck did you say? Are you watching me? Don't fucking watch me, man!

BLACK MAN

My apologies, but I watch everyone. It's well, it's what I do... Here.

The black man hands Maurice his sketch book. Maurice looks around, sets the bottles under his coat on the ground and takes the book. Maurice flips through several pages, taken aback by amazingly detailed drawings: lovers at the park kissing, children laughing together, even a picture of the world seen through an eyeball. Maurice takes a quick peek at the man.

MAURICE

These are pretty good.

BLACK MAN

Thank you. Not everyday I get to show off my work.

Maurice turns another page, focuses in on what looks like a picture of himself stealing from the convenience store. Maurice clears his throat, quickly turns the next page, finds another sketch of himself stealing again.

MAURICE

Who are you anyway? Where you from?

BLACK MAN

The names STEPHEN. STEPHEN HILLSHIRE. Originally I hail from England.

MAURICE

What are you doing out here? Why isn't your stuff hanging up in some famous gallery?

Maurice continues turning pages blindly.

BLACK MAN

Well for starters, look at me. Most people think I'm crazy, but I'm really not. I just can't afford to clean myself up. If I could present myself better, then who knows maybe people would see me different...

MAURICE

That's funny, you sound just like my man I used to know.

Maurice scoffs, looks back down at the sketch book SHOCKED.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORNER - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Stephen, hidden under the shadow of a building, sketches what his eyes witness. A few yards away Oren stands over a body in the middle of the --

STREET

Both of Oren's hands shield his eyes against a LED light, as officer Aaron's government issued pistol stares him in the face.

AARON
 (spoken into radio)
 514, this is Officer Gates, I have
 a black male --

Blinded by the light, Oren attempts to reposition himself. Aaron sees this, drops the radio, grips his pistol firmly with both hands.

AARON (CONT'D)
 I said FREEZE mother fucker! Don't
 move!

Oren grimaces, his hands raised to the sky.

OREN
 I can't see with all that light in
 my eyes.

AARON
 Get on the ground, on your knees!
 Get down on the ground now!!

OREN
 What?? I didn't do this man. He was
 like this when I got here!

AARON
 Shut up and get on your knees! Now!
 Down on your knees!
 (spoken into radio)
 514 requesting backup, now!

OREN
 (panicked)
 God, what's happening right now?
 Officer, honest to God I just left
 my ladies place. I swear!

AARON
 Keep your hands in the fucking air!

Suddenly everything slows to a funerals pace.

Panicked, Oren lowers his arms, his face is marred by fear as he reaches into his pocket. Aaron screams out, *PUT YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM* but all we hear is Oren's terrified breaths. Aaron's face contorts. Learnt reflexes cause Aaron to involuntarily pull the trigger, upon seeing Oren pull his hand out from his pocket. The bullet hits Oren square in the chest, the blow knocks him to the ground. There's sadness in Aaron's eyes when he sees Oren's hand open up... exposing a cell phone.

EXT. PARKING LOT - APARTMENT - PRESENT - NIGHT

Maurice pulls the car into the darkened parking lot where he lives.

INT. SEDAN - SAME

Maurice cuts the engine, grabs Stephen's sketches from off the dash and regards them with true favor. Maurice opens the glove compartment. There is an abrupt change in his expression after seeing a gun inside. Maurice breathes out hard, puts the sketches inside on top of the gun and closes the compartment door. He then grabs a forty from the bag on the seat, unscrews the cap and drinks away.

EXT. SEDAN - PARKING LOT - NEXT MORNING

Shawn's reflection plays off the window, as he knocks against the steamed up drivers side window where Maurice's head lies.

SHAWN

Yo Maurice!

(knocking)

Maurice, you alive in there?

Maurice begins to move, slowly comes to.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

Man open up.

Maurice lethargically opens the door, releasing damp, stale air. Shawn frowns, turns the other way.

SHAWN (CONT'D)

Damn homie. -- Shit.

Maurice grabs his head, grimaces. Shawn notices several empty bottles of Malt Liquor in the car.

MAURICE

(groggy, eyes closed)

How long was I out?

Maurice rotates, sits with his legs outside the car. Shawn snickers, breathes warm air into his hands.

SHAWN

How long were you out? Man, what the hell you talking about? It's eleven o'clock in the morning.

Maurice looks up at Shawn, red eyed, in drunken disbelief.

MAURICE
It's eleven?

Shawn nods his head yes. Maurice sighs, drops his head down in his lap.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Shit...

SHAWN
What's up?

MAURICE
I told Mr. Lui I'd come in early today.

Maurice sneezes.

Shawn frowns as Maurice wipes a snotty nose with his hand.

SHAWN
Damn, hope they still got you washing dishes.

Maurice looks up.

MAURICE
Huh?

SHAWN
Nothing. Here, let's get you inside man.

Maurice extends out his snotty hand. Disgusted, Shawn grimaces, grabs Maurice's forearm instead.

EXT. FIELD - RESIDENTIAL PARK - MORNING

A grey sky prophesies stormy weather. Atop a hill, a throng of birds explode out from the naked branches of Oak trees upon hearing Aaron's voice echo out...

AARON (O.S.)
Helluva throw!

As we descend down, Aaron, football in hand, jogs toward a jaded Allen.

AARON (CONT'D)
Never knew you had an arm like that son. I'm impressed. But throwing a football isn't just about power. A good quarterback has good mechanics.

Aaron puts the football back in his son's hands. Steam emits from the mouths of both men.

AARON (CONT'D)

Here let me show you. Bring your arm back --

Aaron repositions Allen's arm.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NEIGHBORHOOD - LATER DAY

Aaron walks with his hands in his pockets alongside Allen who has the football tucked under his arm.

AARON

So do you have a girlfriend, kids?

ALLEN

No kids, but I do have a girlfriend.

AARON

Yeah? What is she like? Is she nice?

ALLEN

No. She's a bitch, actually. Don't think it's gonna work out for us.

AARON

Sorry to hear that.

ALLEN

... I lied to her... Says she can't trust me now.

AARON

Well, you're just going to have to make an effort to earn it back.

ALLEN

... Yeah...

A prolonged silent moment passes between Aaron and Allen. Neither one knows what to say next.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

I told her you were dead.

Aaron stops, looks at Allen a bit surprised.

AARON

What??

ALLEN

Some years ago she asked about you and mom, wondered when I would introduce her. I kept putting it off. She kept asking. Eventually I told her you died when I was young and that mom took it hard. I liked mom, but I had to lie about her, too, you know... It was a package lie. Then this happened... And the nightmare of you was reborn.

Allen exhales deeply, looks away.

AARON

... Allen.

We can't see, but Allen's eyes are glazed over with sadness.

ALLEN

It's cool. I've learned a bad memory is the key to moving on.

AARON

No look at me, listen. Let me say this, I need to...

(off Allen turning back around)

I've destroyed two lives directly. I've destroyed one emotionally and the other physically, who knows the countless number of lives I've wrecked due to my poor decisions. I made a lot of mistakes, probably enough for a hundred men. But you and that kid whose lives I took are the two thorns in my side that I can never remove. And I have to live with that. It's my punishment.

(deep sigh)

Look Allen, I know I wasn't there for you when you needed me most. Because of me, we know nothing about each other. Now look at you. You've grown into a strong man all on your own. You've survived this long without me, you probably don't need me... But Allen, I need you now... I really do son.

Allen gazes at his father overcome by emotion.

INT. VESTIBULE - FRONT DOOR - AARON'S HOME - MORNING

The sound of a key wrestled into a lock is audible. Eventually the door draws open, in strolls new best buds, Aaron and Allen, football in hand.

Aaron removes his hat, unzips his jacket as Joyce approaches.

AARON

I'm telling you, I was all-state my junior and senior year.
(spoken to Joyce)
Tell him honey.

Joyce moves in towards Aaron, rubs his chest.

JOYCE

It's true. I decided to date your father on the condition that he would make millions once he got to the pros.

AARON

And I would have, had I not blown out my knee in the championship game.

Aaron sighs, nostalgically reminisces on the past. Allen grins, juggles the football in his hands.

ALLEN

And yet you guys stayed together.

JOYCE

What choice did I have? Your father trapped me.

AARON

If I'm not mistaken, I remember someone forgetting to take a very important little pink pill.

JOYCE

Watch it.

Aaron kisses Joyce on the cheek.

AARON

Best mistake you ever made sweetie.

Aaron tries to snatch the ball from Allen before darting upstairs. Joyce smiles, turns to Allen.

JOYCE
So, did you learn anything out
there?

ALLEN
(smiles)
Yeah, I did.

INT. FLOOR - LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - EVENING

Howling wind rattle windows. Behind the counter sits Mr. Lui, perturbed, checking his watch and changes stations on the television.

GUY (O.S.)
Excuse me.

Mr. Lui turns, spots a guy sitting with his lady, holding up an empty bottle of soy sauce.

GUY (CONT'D)
Can we get some more soy sauce?

Mr. Lui nods his head.

MR. LUI
Just a moment.

Mr. Lui sets the remote on the counter and heads to the back. CLOSE UP of the television, weather radar scanning over the East coast, with a caption that reads - **BREAKING NEWS.**

FEMALE WEATHER METEOROLOGIST O.S.
This just in, the National Weather Service has issued a severe thunderstorm warning for South Eastern New York. A severe thunderstorm capable of producing golf ball sized hail has been spotted on radar.

Mr. Lui emerges from the back with a full bottle of soy sauce. The phone behind the counter rings. Mr. Lui gives the bottle to the couple then takes the call.

MR. LUI
Lui's.

INT. DINING ROOM - LOW INCOME APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sheila sits at a table under dim lighting, speaking on the phone.

SHEILA

For pickup.

Several feet away in the --

LIVING ROOM

-- the entire family, all but Janette and Nigiel are squeezed together on the sofa, watching a movie on a small television.

INT. KITCHEN - AARON'S HOME - NIGHT

Joyce adds soap to the dishwasher, speaks into a home phone.

JOYCE

No, that's it.

(listening)

Bates. Yes, B-A-T-E-S.

(listening)

Great. Thank you.

Joyce closes the dishwasher door, starts the cycle.

JOYCE (CONT'D)

(yells out)

Guys, Chinese food will be here in
20 minutes.

Joyce plugs the home phone back on its charger, exits the kitchen

INT. FLOOR - LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT

Mr. Lui tears off the ticket, walks to the --

KITCHEN

-- and sticks the new ticket where the resident Chinese cook can see it. The cook reads the ticket, then points to packaged food waiting to be delivered.

CHINESE COOK

(spoken in Chinese)

This needs to go out. Where's Bai?

Mr. Lui shakes his head.

MR. LUI

(spoken in Chinese)

No show.

CHINESE COOK

(spoken in Chinese)

Who's going to do deliveries then?

Mr. Lui mulls over his predicament, his eyes follow a Chinese server who brings more dirty dishes over for Maurice to wash.

MR. LUI
(calls out)
Maurice.

Maurice looks at Mr. Lui.

MR. LUI (CONT'D)
You deliver food, make tip, okay?

INT. FRONT DOOR - APARTMENT - NIGHT

Maurice stands outside in the hall, receives a TWENTY DOLLAR BILL from a faceless resident.

MAURICE
Need any change?

APARTMENT RESIDENT O.S.
Na, you good.

Maurice folds the bill, pockets it.

MAURICE
Thanks. Enjoy your food.

INT. DARK COMMON AREA - AARON'S HOME - 40 MINUTES LATER

Light from a television plays off Allen's pained face as he turns to his father.

ALLEN
I'm starving. This Chinese food's taking forever. Where's mom?

Aaron reclines back on the same sofa, sipping on a beer.

AARON
Around here somewhere.

MASTER BEDROOM

The bedroom door is ajar. Allen knocks, calls out --

ALLEN
Hey mom!

Allen enters the room, moves toward the bathroom door.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
Hey mom, any idea when the Chinese food's supposed to get here?

The sound of humming is heard under a roaring shower.

INT. POLICE SEDAN - NIGHT

Windshield wipers sway left and right, battling against torrents of rain. A door opens, the outside elements enter as does Louis, dressed in a Swat uniform.

LOUIS
 (short beat, exhales)
 I've been thinking, there should be
 one day out of the year where we
 just let shit happen.

Louis wipes excess water from his jacket, glances at Rob unmotivated.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
 What do you think?

ROB SIMS
 Think we need to get going. You
 ready?

LOUIS
 If I say no can we stay?

Rob grins, changes gears and drives off.

EXT. SUV - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Sheila exits the SUV, open her umbrella and runs across a parking lot toward a shop with a glowing neon pizza sign.

INT. LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - SAME

Maurice enters the restaurant drenched, pats down his clothes.

MR. LUI
 Any problem?

Maurice wipes his face with a towel, sardonically answers --

MAURICE
 Na, just wet...

MR. LUI
 (smiles)
 Hao shì.
 (off Maurice's frown)
 In Chinese, hao shì mean good.
 (gives a thumbs up)
 Hao shì, but slow...

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - SAME

Sheila waits at the counter watching an EMPLOYEE remove her freshly baked pizza from the oven.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (O.S.)
Sheila??... Sheila is that you??

Sheila glances over her shoulder, surprised to see the female staff worker standing alongside the handsome bartender.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)
It is you!

The staff worker moves in, opens her arms. Sheila reluctantly accepts her embrace.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)
My God, how have you been?

SHEILA
Okay...

The staff worker steps back, once overs Sheila.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
You look better than okay! How long has it been? I think the last time I saw you was... .. Yeah so, uh...
(glances back at the bartender)
Jason, this is Sheila. Sheila, I'm sure you remember Jason...

BARTENDER
(smiling)
Nice to see you again.

Sheila shamefully nods her head at Jason.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
Look Sheila...

EMPLOYEE (O.S.)
Mam, your pizza's ready.

Sheila turns, receives her pizza.

EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)
Be careful, it's hot.

SHEILA
(spoken to staff worker)
I'm sorry but I need to get back.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER
Yeah, no problem...

Sheila smiles curtly, moves quickly toward the door.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)
... Hey Sheila?

Sheila pauses, turns around.

FEMALE STAFF WORKER (CONT'D)
(spoken earnestly)
My number hasn't changed.

Sheila nods her head before exiting the shop.

INT. KITCHEN - LUI'S CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Maurice examines a receipt stapled to a brown paper bag, turns to the Chinese cook.

MAURICE
Ey, there's no address on this
receipt?

The Chinese cook lowers the flame under a wok, approaches Maurice with a pained expression.

MAURICE (CONT'D)
Address -- There's no address? How
am I supposed to know where to go?

CHINESE COOK
Shénme?

MAURICE
What??
(frowning, pointing to
receipt)
A-D-D-R-E-S-S. To deliver food, I
need an address. This has to go
out.

CHINESE COOK
Yes, go. You go.

Maurice smacks his lips, leaves the kitchen frustrated.

COUNTER - RESTAURANT FLOOR

Maurice brings the bag to Mr. Lui.

MAURICE

Mr. Lui, there's no address on
this.

Mr. Lui checks the receipt, opens a ledger and runs his
finger down the page.

MR. LUI

Hmm --

(finds order)

Ah, here Bates. Sorry, Mr. Lui make
mistake.

MAURICE

...Bates??

The name BATES stuns Maurice like a blow to the kidney.

MR. LUI

(writes address on bag)

4531 East Oak Lane, not far.

Mr. Lui reaches under the counter, hands Maurice a dark
poncho.

MR. LUI (CONT'D)

Here take poncho. Weather nasty.

Mr. Lui holds out the poncho, waves his hands across
Maurice's blank face.

MR. LUI (CONT'D)

Maurice?

(off Maurice coming to)

Here, take poncho.

PARKING LOT

Disguised under the poncho, Maurice waits for a car to pass
before scurrying across a lot blanketed with pellets of ice
toward the --

BMW SEDAN

Maurice crawls into his car, closes the door... and loses it.
He pounds his fist into the steering wheel, cries out.
Maurice covers his face with both hands, tries to gather his
breaths... Eventually his heartbeat softens. Maurice now
knows what he must do.

Assured, Maurice starts his car, switches gears, begins to
back out but is stopped by SEVERAL KNOCKS at the window.

Maurice turns, lays eyes on Allen, standing outside under an umbrella pummeled by hail. Allen waves, gestures for Maurice to roll down the window. Maurice does.

ALLEN
(admiring the BMW sedan)
(spoken loudly)
Nice car!

Maurice is not in the mood for compliments.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
(spoken loudly)
... So yeah, the guy inside told me to catch you before you left. Not sure what happened with the delivery, but he said you had my order.

MAURICE
Who are you?

ALLEN
I'm Allen. But the name on the order should be Bates. We ordered three orders of chicken fried rice.

Allen peeks inside at the order.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
Think that's it right there. Looks like my address, yeah that's it, 4531 East Oak Lane.

Maurice lowers his eyes. Allen digs into his pockets.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
Hey look, here's a few bucks for your trouble.

Allen holds out several dollars.

MAURICE
My trouble??

ALLEN
... Well yeah. You were about to go deliver this to my address, figured I'd at least tip and not be a dick.

MAURICE
Keep it.

Maurice reaches over and hands Allen his food. Suddenly the world grows quiet, hail no longer falls from the sky. Together, Maurice and Allen both look up.

LOUIS (PRE-LAP)
 (spoken to Rob)
 Them miracles just keep coming,
 don't they?

INT. MOVING - POLICE SEDAN - NIGHT

With the phone at his ear, Louis glances out the window, looks up into the clear night sky.

LOUIS
 (spoken over phone)
 Hey baby it's me.
 (listening)
 Yeah everything is fine, false
 alarm.
 (listening)
 I'd say so...

Louis glances at Rob.

LOUIS (CONT'D)
 Rob over here likes to think
 everything's predicated on luck.
 (listening)
 I know, I know. But anyway, I was
 calling to let you know Rob and I
 are on our way over.

INT. BEDROOM - JON'S HOME - LATER NIGHT

Jon and Christine lie awake on opposite ends of the bed, both staring at the ceiling with thousand-yard gazes. After a prolonged beat, Jon speaks.

JON JOHNSON
 You're fucking crazy.

Jon turns to Christine.

JON JOHNSON (CONT'D)
 You know that?

CUT TO:

EXT. HOME - NEIGHBORHOOD - FLASHBACK - EVENING

The pubescent girl looks out the window at her admirer, Ty. She appears to smile before turning out the light.

PICKUP TRUCK

Ty takes a long final drag of his cigarette before tossing it out the window. Ty reaches into his pocket, pulls out his ringing phone.

TY
(spoken into phone)
Hello??

INT. SEDAN - PARKING LOT - SAME

Christine watches Alexis make sure the coast is clear before getting into Jon's car.

CHRISTINE JOHNSON
(spoken into phone)
I need you to do me a favor.

THE END.